

The Hiders

by Philip Buckland



A Frank Hurley mystery

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CHAPTER I

I stopped my Dodge at the high gate bearing the sign lettered DRUMM INDUSTRIES. A tall, stringy man in a blue-gray uniform walked out of the gatehouse and over to me and looked over my car and me.

"My name is Frank Hurley," I told the guard. "I have an appointment with Mr. Drumm."

"I know," the guard said. "Just a routine a check, Mr. Hurley . . . "

"I understand,"

Then the guard went back into the gatehouse and picked up the receiver of a phone and spoke into it. After that he replaced the receiver and nodded and pressed the button which cycled the barred gate open, and then he came out of the gatehouse and back to me and pointed to a building inside the plant and spoke to me again: "You see that building there in the center of the plant?"

"Yes,"

"That's the main building. Mr. Drumm's office is in the main building and on the top floor." Then the guard told me the number of Robert Drumm's office. "Just drive straight ahead," he then said. "You can't miss it."

"Thank you," I said.

"No problem,"

Then I drove into the plant to keep my appointment with Robert Drumm, the founder and owner of Drumm Industries, a private industry that was in the business of making, selling, and repairing real guns, custom made guns, replica guns, ammunition, and holsters.

When I reached the main building, I parked my car in front of it, and then I got out of my car and locked it, and then I went into the main building and took the elevator up to the top floor.

The outer room of Drumm's office was big and wide and spacious, with white walls, and on the walls were various paintings and pictures, and against two of the walls were long shiny black leather couches, and in front of the couches were light wood brown tables. On one side of the front door to Drumm's office, and against the wall, was a coffee bar. And the carpet was yellow.

A girl was sitting behind her big maple desk, which was next to the front door of Drumm's office, and doing some computerwork. She was slender and had platinum blonde hair and a slender oval shaped face.

She looked up from her work when she heard the door open and saw me come in. Then she smiled at me and spoke to me: "Hello. Can I help you?"

"My name is Frank Hurley," I told her and smiled at her. "I have an appointment with Mr. Drumm."

"Oh, yes," Then the blonde picked up the receiver of her cream white phone and pressed a button on the phone and spoke into the receiver of the phone: "Mr. Frank Hurley is

here...All right." Then she replaced the receiver and spoke to me again: "Mr. Drumm will be with you in a moment."

"All right," I said, smiling.

"My name is Pamela Baines," the blonde introduced herself to me and extended her hand. I shook hands with her. Her grip was firm yet pleasant.

"So you're a detective, huh?" she then said to me.

"Yes, I am," I said.

"That must be exciting work."

"It has its moments."

Pamela laughed.

Her phone rang. She picked up the receiver and said: "Yes?...All right." Then she replaced the receiver and spoke to me again: "Mr. Drumm will see you now."

Then I went into Drumm's office and closed the door, and Pamela continued doing her comptuerwork.

Drumm was sitting behind his big maple desk and penning his way through some paperwork. He glanced up at me when he heard the door open and saw me come in.

"I'll be right with you," he told me. "I'm almost done here."

"All right," I said. "Take your time."

He did, and I looked around his office. The room was just as big and wide and spacious as the outer room. And it, too, had white walls, and on the walls were various pictures and paintings, but against one of the walls inside the room was just one long shiny black leather couch, but there was no table before the couch. And the couch was next to the front door of Drumm's office. And the carpet in *this* room was yellow, too.

Drumm finished his paperwork, and then he tossed his pen on his desk and stood up.

He was tall, slim, pale, had black hair, a stern face, and he was wearing a brown suit and a white shirt and a black tie.

He smiled at me and extended his hand.

He and I shook hands, and I smiled at him. His grip was firm yet gentle.

"Can I get you something to drink, Mr. Hurley?" he asked me.

"No, I'm fine," I said.

"Won't you sit down."

We did.

"I understand that you look into anything secret or illegal," Drumm said to me.

"That's right," I said. "I do."

"Well, I'd like to have you continue looking into something that I think was done illegally: someone ran me out of town."

CHAPTER II

Well, that got my attention. I gave Drumm a fixed gaze. "Someone ran you out of town?"

"That's right," he said.

"Why?"

"They said I was hassling the girlfriend of one of the people who ran me out of town. And the girl backed up what they said. But all I did was talk to her. I was returning home from a business trip I took, and then I got tired, so I decided to stay at the town they ran me out of, then return home the next day. Then I checked into the motel at that place, and then I rested up, and then I walked over to the restaurant in that place and had dinner there. The girl who waited on me while I was at the restaurant and having my dinner was the girlfriend of one of the people who ran me out of town. But all we did was talk while she waited on me. We didn't hassle each other. And after I ate I walked over to the theatre in that town and saw a movie. And after I saw the movie, I walked back to the motel so I could turn in and go home the next day. Then I saw these people standing next to my car. Then they told me to get out of town because I was hassling the girlfriend of one of the people who ran me out of town. And the girl was there with them and confirmed what they told me. Then I told them I didn't hassle the girl. But they and the girl insisted that I did hassle the girl, and then they told me to get out of town. They even told me that they already paid my bill and packed my bag, and I saw my bag standing next to my car. So instead of arguing with them, I got into my car and left."

"Did you tell the police about this?"

"There was no police station in that town, so I went to the police station that was near that town and told them what these people did, and then the police looked into it."

"And?"

"The people who ran me out of town said that they didn't run me out of town. They said they didn't even know me. They never met me. And the girl they said I hassled said that I didn't hassle her. All we did was talk when she waited on me at that restaurant I had dinner at. She also told the police that I was just passing through. I didn't stay at the motel in that town. And then the girl told the police that I left town after I had my dinner. She said she even saw me leave after I had my dinner. She also said that I didn't even go to theatre in that town after I had my dinner. And then the police left. That was the end of it. There wasn't anything else to look into."

"I see. Well, it looks like someone didn't want you or anyone else to know about something that was going on in that town, or will go on in that town, or is going on in that town. That would explain why those people ran you out of town, and why they lied to the police when the police asked them why they ran you out of town. These people who ran you out of town. Were they the police or private citizens?"

"Private citizens."

"I see. Well, you are right about how they ran you out of town. It does look like they ran you out of town illegally. The excuse they gave you for running you out of town wasn't a good excuse for them to run you out of town."

"I know,"

"And they didn't have the police in another town put you in jail for hassling this girl. If they did, the police would investigate the complaint of your hassling this girl. And that would expose whatever it is that's going on in that town, or did go on in that town, or will go on in that town. And you must have said or done something that caused these people to run you out of town when they did, too."

Drumm wondered about this. "But what could I have said or done that made them run me out of town when they did?"

"Maybe you did or said something that caused them to run you out of town when they did, but you didn't know you did it. There is that possibility. Think back. *Did* you say or do something that made them run you out of town when they did?"

Drumm shook his head. "Not that I know of." he said.

"Well, maybe you did something or said something before you went to town and then they ran you out of town at that time."

Drumm shook his head. "No." he said.

"Well, maybe you did or said something while you were going to this town, and then they ran you out of town at that time."

Drumm wondered about that. Then he spoke: "There *was* something I did do."

"What?"

"I saw some people taking some things out of these cars and taking them into this house."

"What was it these people were taking out of the car and taking into the house?"

"I don't know. I didn't see what it was they were taking out of the car and taking into the house. I was driving by that place when I went into town."

"And because of this, you weren't there very long to see the faces of these people who were taking the things out of the cars and into the house, and you didn't see what kind of cars they were driving, either."

"No."

I took my pen and notebook out of my pocket and spoke to Drumm again: "Where was this house?"

Drumm told me, and then I wrote it down in my notebook. "And what does this house look like?" I then asked Drumm.

Drumm told me, and I wrote it down in my notebook.

"You think that what these people did at the house has to do with the reason why those people ran me out of town?" Drumm asked me.

"Maybe. Maybe not," I answered Drumm's question. "I'll try to find out."

"You'll take the case?"

"Yes, I will,"

"Thank you, Mr. Hurley,"

"You're welcome, Mr. Drumm," Then I finished writing down in my notebook the location of the house that these people had taken the things into from the car and spoke to Drumm again: "But understand this: if I find out that these people who ran you out of town are committing some kind of crime, or will commit some kind of crime, or have committed some kind of crime, I'll have to call the police. With or without your knowledge or permission."

"I understand,"

"Good. Now. My fee is twenty five dollars an hour."

"I can pay it and I will."

"Good. Now. I'll need to know some things. These people who ran you out of town. Who are they? Did they tell you their names?"

"They didn't tell *me* their names when they ran me out of town, but they did tell the police their names when the police questioned them. The police told them that they needed their names for the report. I was there when they questioned them," Then Drumm told me the names of the people who had run him out of town, and I wrote down their names in my notebook, and then I asked Drumm what they looked like and Drumm told me and I wrote down their physical descriptions in my notebook. After that I asked Drumm if he knew the name of the girl he was supposed to have hassled and then Drumm told me and I wrote down in my notebook the name. Then I asked Drumm what the girl looked like, and then Drumm told me and I wrote down in my notebook her physical description. Then I asked Drumm what the name of the restaurant was that the girl worked at, and then Drumm told me, and then I wrote down the name of the restaurant in my notebook. Then I asked Drumm what the name of the theatre was that he saw the movie at, and then he told me, and then I wrote it down in my notebook. Then I asked Drumm what the name of the motel was that he had checked into and then he told me, and then I wrote down the name of the motel in my notebook. Then I asked Drumm what the name of the person at the front desk of the motel he had stayed at was. Then he told me and I wrote that down in my notebook, and then I asked Drumm what the person at the front desk of the motel looked like, and then Drumm told me, and then I wrote down the person's physical description in my notebook. Then I asked Drumm what the name of the town was that he had gotten run out of, and then Drumm told me, and then I wrote down in my notebook the name of the town that he had gotten run out of. Then I asked Drumm where the town was and how to get there, and then Drumm told me, and then I wrote that down in my notebook.

"All right," I said after I had finished writing down in my notebook all of this information. "This is what I want you to do: don't make anymore trips over to Ville. No sense making more wasted trips over there. As far as you're concerned, you took care of your business there. And now you're here in Bellingham and taking care of your business here. And if you have any other business somewhere else, you go to that place and take care of that business. As for me, I'm going to go over to Ville as myself, Frank Hurley, private

investigator, and check into the Lodge and say that a friend of mine, Robert Drumm, founder and owner of Drumm Industries, and I had decided that we needed to take a vacation. To get away from it all. And we had decided to take our vacations in some nice, quiet secluded place. And so we had decided to take our vacations in Ville. We had heard about it. And you were going to there to Ville. And then I ask this Hal, or anyone else who's on duty at the front desk, if you showed up. And then we see what happens after that. This is how I'm going to start off the investigation."

"Isn't that dangerous?"

"It would be if these people who ran you out of town were doing something illegal. But if they're doing something legal, then that's different. Just because they don't want anyone to know what it is they're doing doesn't mean that what it is they're doing is illegal. Maybe it *is* illegal. Or maybe it's legal. But I will be taking precautions to keep myself out of danger. I'll have to." Then I asked Drumm what the name of the police officer who had questioned the people who had run Drumm out of town was and where the police station *he* worked at was, and then Drumm told me, and then I wrote this information down in my notebook. I was going to need to see about having *that* police officer help me take these precautions while I work on the case, and I told Drumm this. After I finished writing this information down in my notebook, I noticed the answering machine on Drumm's desk and spoke to Drumm again: "You have an answering machine. That's good. You can screen any calls you get from someone from Ville. But that's all you do, is just screen the calls you get from someone from Ville. Do you have an answering machine at home, too?"

"Yes,"

"Good. Screen any calls you get from someone from Ville at home, too. I noticed that your secretary has an answering machine here at work, too. Have her screen any calls she gets from someone from Ville, too. Does she have an answering machine at home, too?"

"Yes,"

"Good. Have her screen any calls she gets from someone from Ville whenever she's at home, too."

"All right. Anything else, Mr. Drumm?"

"No. I think that's it."

"All right. I'll be in touch," Then I stood up and so did Drumm, and then the both of us shook hands.

"Thank you for coming in, Mr. Hurley," Drumm said to me.

"You're welcome, Mr. Drumm," I said to him. Then I left his office.

I walked out of the building and back to my car and looked at my watch. Four minutes to two. My appointment with Drumm had been at one thirty. I had the opportunity to start my new assignment tomorrow. And should. It was getting late in the day. And because of that I didn't feel like starting the assignment today. But what I could do today that had to do with the assignment was get something to eat and get some sleep. And should. I didn't know when I was going to get the chance to eat and sleep again.

That was the way it was in the private investigation business: whenever you have the chance to do something, you take it. Because you don't know when you'll get the chance to do it again.

I reached my car and unlocked it, and then I got into my car and started it up and drove out of Drumm Industries and looked around for a place to eat at.

Appleby's was in Sunset Square and on Sunset Drive.

I was inside Appleby's now. Sitting at a booth and sipping the coffee I had ordered and waiting for the meal I had ordered to come and thought about the things that I was going to need to do before I go over to Ville and start my assignment. Then I wrote them down in my notebook so I wouldn't forget them.

Shortly after I had written them down in my notebook, my meal came. Then I dug right into it: fish and chips. And I washed it down with more coffee. For dessert I had chocolate ice cream. And washed it down with more coffee.

I felt better after I had eaten. Then I had some more coffee, and then I left a nice tip on the table, and then I paid my check and left the restaurant and went home.

Home was on Liberty Street.

I was here at home now. I had gotten undressed, and then I had taken a shower, and then I had gotten into my pajamas and bathrobe and slippers. Now I was inside the living room and watching TV. And I watched TV until eleven, and then I turned the TV off and went into my room, and then I turned the light on and set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at tomorrow, and then I slid my Smith and Wesson .38 Special underneath the pillow, and then I got out of my bathrobe and slippers and turned off the light and got into bed and went to sleep.

The next day, I was here at my office on Cornwall Avenue. It was time for me to do these things that needed to be done before I go over to Ville and start my assignment.

I was doing one of those things now: deciding what to call the case. And then I reached a decision. I had decided to call the case the Drumm ejection case. Since Drumm had been run out of town, although the people who had run him out of town said they hadn't run him out of him. So I wrote DRUMM EJECTION CASE on the folder, and then I got on the computer and wrote a statement of everything that Drumm and I had talked about at the meeting, and then I printed out the statement and put it into the folder, and then I got back on the computer to reread and print out and put into the folder the information I had gotten on Drumm and Drumm Industries. Yesterday after Drumm had called me and we made our appointment, I had run a check on Drumm and Drumm Industries. But at that time, I hadn't opened up a file on them because I didn't know if I were going to take whatever case Drumm gives me or not.

Drumm *was* the founder and owner of Drumm Industries. He had lived here in Bellingham, Washington all of his life. He still lived here in Bellingham. Model citizen. Good credit rating. Because of that, he was going to be able to pay my fee. I liked that.

And Drumm Industries *was* in the business of making, selling, and repairing real guns, custom made guns, replica guns, ammunition, and holsters. Drumm Industries had been in business for a long time, and it was still in business, and it was still doing well.

I printed out the information on Drumm and Drumm Industries and put it into the folder of the file on the Drumm ejection case. The next thing that had to be done before I go to Ville and carry out my assignment was run checks on those people who had run out Drumm out of town. I did.

There were no criminal records on those people. Then I printed out the information I had gotten on those people, and then I put the information into the folder.

Then I turned the computer off and did the next thing that I had to do before I go over to Ville and carry out my assignment: which was call Captain Paul Davis of the Detective Unit of the police department in Tacoma, Washington, *and*, the police officer who had questioned those people who had run Drumm out of town, and tell him what I was going to do in Ville and why and see about having him help me take precautions against danger.

After I did that, I did the last thing that had to be done before I go to Ville and carry out my assignment: which was call the Lodge and make my motel reservation.

After I did that, I looked at the list of all of the things that I was going to need to do before I go to Ville and carry out my assignment to see that I had done all of them. I did. Then I tore the list out of my notebook and turned on the paper shredder, and then I fed the list into the paper shredder, and then I saw the list turn into spaghetti. Then I turned the paper shredder off and stood up and unlocked one of my filing cabinets and put the Drumm ejection case file into the cabinet, and then I locked up the cabinet. Then I looked at my watch. Eleven thirty-four.

I had done all of the things that I had needed to do before I go to Ville and carry out my assignment, and I had more than enough time to pack before I go to Ville and carry out my assignment, so I might as well do whatever I wanted to do before I pack and go to Ville and carry out assignment. I had the time to do it. And I didn't know when I was going to get the chance to do it again.

One of the things I had the chance to do before I pack and go to Ville and carry out my assignment was get something to eat. I was getting hungry. So I turned on the answering machine, and then I walked over to the front door of my office and turned on the light, which was on the wall and next to the front door of my office, and then light flooded the room, and then I stepped out of my office and closed and locked the door, and then I walked out into the parking lot and over to my car and unlocked it, and then I got into my car and started it up, and then I pulled out of the parking lot so I could go get something to eat.

CHAPTER III

Ville was in the state of Washington, and a few miles below Tacoma. The town was so small that it looked like you left it right after you entered it. There were a few shops and stores inside the town. But there was no police station inside the town.

Ville was also the name of the town that Drumm had been run out of.

I arrived here at Ville and drove through it, and when I reached the Lodge, I turned into the driveway and parked my car in front of some motel rooms. The Lodge was the name of the motel that Drumm had stayed at when he had come here to Ville to stay the night before he goes home.

I got out of my car and locked it, and then I went into the Office so I could register. Then I saw Hal. I recognized him from the description of him that Drumm had given me, although I didn't look like I recognized him. I couldn't look like I recognized him.

He was standing behind the front desk. He was tall, thin, almost emaciated, tanned, had slick looking black hair combed neatly away from his forehead, and the face of a worm.

"Hello," he said to me when he heard the door open and saw me come in.

"Hello," I said to him. "My name is Frank Hurley. I made a reservation?"

Hal looked through a box of cards and found the one he was looking for. Then he spoke to me: "Yes, you did." Then he put another card on the counter and asked me to register. I did. Then it was time for me to start off the investigation the way I had planned. "I'm supposed to meet a friend of mine here. He's going to be staying at the Lodge, too. His name is Robert Drumm. Would you know if he's come?"

"Let me see," Then Hal looked through the same box of cards for Drumm's reservation card, and then he spoke to me: "No. He hasn't even made a reservation."

"Oh, really?" Hal said, smiling.

"Yes,"

"Well, maybe he hasn't made his reservation yet. He did say that he was going to meet me here at the Lodge. We decided to take our vacations here in Ville. We had heard about this place. Well, when he shows up, let me know, will ya?"

"I'll do that,"

"Thank you,"

"You're welcome," Then Hal turned around and took a key out of a box and gave it to me and told me the number of the room I was going to stay in.

"Thanks," I said. Then I left the Office and went back to my car and retrieved my luggage from the car, and then I unlocked the door of the room I was going to be staying in and went into the room and closed the door. After that I tossed the luggage on the bed. Then I looked around the room. I hadn't turned the light on because I could see inside the room. It wasn't dark enough for me to turn the light on. Then I saw a TV remote control on the table against the wall and walked over to it, and then I picked up the remote control and aimed it at the TV, and then I pressed the power button on the remote, and then the TV came on. Then I adjusted

the sound. I was going to need to have the TV on whenever I talk to Davis or to Drum or anyone else who was helping me out on the Drumm ejection case so that my conversation with anyone of these people won't be overheard. And then I looked around the room to see if it were bugged or if something else had happened here inside this room before I had come here to Ville. It wasn't. Then I checked the phone. It wasn't tapped. Then I sat down on the bed and took my cell phone out of my pocket and called Davis.

"Davis," he said.

"Hello," I said. "Captain? Frank Hurley. I just arrived here at Ville and checked into the Lodge and started off the investigation the way I had planned." Then I told Davis what had happened when I had started off the investigation the way I had planned.

"I see," Davis said after I had finished. "Well, if this Hal didn't get alarmed when you mentioned Drumm's name, then that would mean that he and the rest of the people who ran Drumm out of town did what they had to do that had to do with their running Drumm out of town. And if Hal tells the rest of these people who ran Drumm out of town about his conversation with you, then they won't get alarmed, either."

"Of course. Which means that if they did do what they had to do with their running Drumm out of town, then nothing's going to happen."

"Yeah."

"Or maybe they're doing a good job at keeping someone from knowing about something."

"Yeah. There is that possibility."

"Or maybe something's going to happen later,"

"Well, if these people have done what they had to do that had to do their running Drumm out of town, or if they're doing a good job at keeping someone from knowing about something, then what would happen later?"

"I don't know. But I don't want to overlook the possibility of something happening later."

"Of course. Well, something *does* happen later, let me know, will ya?"

"I'll do that."

"In the meantime, we go ahead as planned on taking the safety measures we talked about while you conduct your investigation."

"Yeah. I also checked my motel room to see if it's bugged. It's not. I also checked the phone in the room. It's not tapped."

"Which means that the people who ran Drumm out of town don't know why you're here."

"That's right."

"I ran a check on you after we talked about what you're going to do there in Ville. Craig Pritchard gives his regards. He also told me to tell you that if there's anything he could do, let him know."

"I'll do that."

"Anything else, Mr. Hurley?"

"No, that's it. Bye."

"Bye,"

Then Davis and I hung up.

Craig Pritchard was a lieutenant in the Detective Unit of the Bellingham Police Department. He was also a good friend of mine. I put my cell phone back into my pocket and put the TV remote control back on the table, and then I unpacked. After that looked at my watch. One twenty-six.

I had time to take a nap. I was getting sleepy. So I might as well take a nap while I had the chance to take a nap. Because I didn't know when I was going to get the chance to take a nap again. But before I was going to take my nap, I was going to set up my motel room for burglary alert. So I locked the door, and then I put a chair underneath the knob of the door, and then I spread the papers of a newspaper I had bought from a vending machine outside a restaurant I had stopped at and had eaten at before I had come here to Ville on the floor and in front of the chair. Then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at later this evening, and then I got undressed and got into my pajamas and got into bed and went to sleep.

The alarm clock buzzed. I stirred, then came awake and looked at the time. The alarm clock told me it was the time I had wanted to get up at. Then I got out of bed and went over to another table the coffee pot was on and made a pot of coffee.

After it finished perking, I drank the coffee. I needed to wake up before I call Drumm and let him know that I was here in Ville and what I had discovered and had done up to now.

After I had drank two cups of coffee, I turned the TV on and got on my cell phone and called Drumm at work and told him I was here in Ville and what I had done and had discovered up to now.

"I see," Drumm said after I had finished.

"How are *you* doing?" I asked him. "Has anyone from Ville called you?"

"I don't know. A couple of people called me at work and at home, but they didn't say anything on the other end of the phone. Then they hung up."

"Maybe it *was* someone from Ville who called you, but he didn't leave a message, or maybe it was someone else who called you, but he didn't leave a message. If it *were* someone from Ville who called you, but he didn't leave a message, then that would mean that he was checking up on you."

"Well, then if he's checking up on me, then that maybe a good sign. It would prove that he's hiding something that has to do with his and those other people running me out of town."

"Yeah. Or maybe they did what they had to do that has to do with their running you out of town, but they still need to check up on you. Taking a precaution."

"I see. Although they didn't call me up to check up on me before you went down to Ville and checked into the Lodge."

"Probably because they didn't have to at that time. What about your secretary? Has *she* received any calls from someone from Ville? At work or at home?"

"No,"

"Probably because they don't have to worry about her. She's not a threat to them."

"Could be,"

"I'll tell Captain Davis what we've talked about, and then I'll resume my assignment."

"All right. Anything else, Mr. Hurley?"

"No, that's it. Bye, Mr. Drumm,"

"Bye,"

Then Drumm and I hung up. After that I called Davis and told him about my phone conversation with Drumm. Then we hung up. There wasn't anything that he and I needed to talk about right now. Then I looked at the alarm clock. Two forty-five.

I had time to finish the coffee before I resume my assignment. And should. So I went back to the coffee pot and poured me some more coffee and went back to the bed and sat down on it and continued watching TV and continued sipping the coffee and took my time sipping the coffee since I knew I had time to take my time finishing the coffee. I also thought about what I could do next in the assignment until or unless something happens: which was do the same things that Drumm had done when he had come here to Ville to rest up before he goes home, and before he had been run out of town. Maybe it'll tell me something. Maybe it won't. Maybe something'll happen. Maybe something won't.

And I could do the same things that Drumm had done when he had gotten here to Ville to rest up before he goes home, and before those people had run him out of town tonight. I looked at the clock. Three eleven.

I had time before I could do the same things that Drumm had done when he had gotten here to Ville to rest up before he goes home, and before those people had run him out of town. So I went back to finishing the coffee and watching TV and keeping track of time.

After I had finished the coffee, I made some more coffee. It was too soon for me to do what I had planned for tonight. I was going to start doing what I had planned for tonight at five. So I went back to the bed and sat down on it and continued watching TV and continued keeping track of time while the coffee was cooking.

After the coffee had finished cooking, I had some and continued watching TV and continued keeping track of time until five. Then I got out of my pajamas and went into the bathroom and shaved and showered, and then I went back into the room and got dressed, and then I turned the coffee maker off, and then I disassembled the set up I had made for burglar alert, and then I turned the TV off, and then I turned the light on and stepped out of the room and closed and locked the door, and then I left the room.

The Sundown Theatre was across the street from the Lodge. This was the theatre that Drumm had seen the movie at after he had dinner, and before those people had run him out of town.

I crossed the street and walked over to the Sundown Theatre and looked at all the posters on the wall of the theatre so I could decide what movie I want to see after dinner. Then I decided on what movie to I wanted see after dinner, and then I checked the listings for that movie, and then I decided on what time to see the movie at the box office, and then I left the theatre.

Meal Time was across the street from the Sundown Theatre. Right next to the Lodge. Meal Time was the restaurant that Drumm had had dinner at before he had seen his movie, and where he had talked to the girl who had been in on running Drumm out of town.

I crossed the street and went into Meal Time and stopped and looked around the room.

It looked like it was getting busy. Then I saw Valerie Bush. I recognized from the description of her that Drumm had given me. Although I didn't look, sound, or act like I recognized her. I couldn't. Because of the way I was conducting the investigation. I had to continue conducting the investigation the way I had planned.

Valerie was tall, slender, had blonde hair, a creamy tan complexion, thin red lips, and she was wearing a long sleeve white shirt and a tight fitting marine blue skirt and flesh tone stockings and black high heel shoes.

She was waiting on the customers.

I looked around for a table. I found a booth instead. Then I went over to it and sat down in it.

Valerie came over to me and gave me a menu. I saw her eyes. They were blue and clear. Then I told her that I'd like to have some coffee, and then she went away and came back with a cup of coffee, and I looked at the menu. I also thought about my first encounter with her. Which was none. If she *had* been in on running Drumm out of town with Hal and the rest of those people who had run Drumm out of town, then Hal must have told Valerie about his conversation with me after I arrived here in Ville and when I had checked into the Lodge and what I looked like. And then Valerie acted the same way about his conversation with me that *he* had. And then there was something else: if Hal had told Valerie about his conversation with me after I had arrived here in Ville and after I had checked into the Lodge, then he may have told the rest of the people who had run Drumm out of town about his conversation with me when I had arrived here in Ville and when I had checked into the Lodge.

So if all of them acted like they had nothing to hide, then that would mean that they had done what they had had to do that had to do with their running Drumm out of town, or they're going to do something later, that had to do with their running Drumm out of town. Or, if something were happening right now that had to do with their running Drumm out of town, then they'd have to act like they're not hiding anything so they won't arouse suspicion.

Valerie came back to take my order.

I smiled at her and spoke to her: "You know, everything looks so good that I can't make up my mind what I want."

Valerie smiled.

"Can you recommend something?" I asked her.

"Try the chicken fried steak," she recommended. "It's one of our biggest sellers."

"O.K. Chicken fried steak it is."

Valerie wrote my order down in her ticket book. Then she asked me if I'd like to have a baked potato or fries or mashed potatoes, and I told her I'd like to have a baked potato with all the works. Then she asked if I'd like to have soup or salad with my meal, and I told her I'd like

to have a salad with my meal. Blue cheese dressing. And she wrote all of this down in her ticket book. "I haven't seen *you* here before." She then said to me.

"That's because I've never been here before," I told her. "This is my first time here in Ville. And I'll be here for a few more days. I'm on vacation, and I decided to take my vacation in a nice quiet small town."

"Well, you picked the right place. Ville is as quiet and small as it's gonna get."

"Really,"

"Yeah. Where are you from?"

"Bellingham. I don't know if you this or not, but Bellingham is here in the state of Washington, too."

"Yes. I know that. Although I haven't been there before."

"Oh, really?"

"Yeah."

"Well, you should visit it some time. You might like it."

"Perhaps I will. Well. I'd better give the cook your order. You must be hungry."

"Yeah, I am," I said, smiling.

Then Valerie went away.

Then I thought about my second encounter with her. Which was the same as the first one.

Valerie came back with my salad, and then I dug right into it, and Valerie left. I didn't think about this new encounter. Because there was nothing about it to think about. It was the same as the last one.

I was facing the front door of the restaurant while I was eating my salad. I got a good view of everything that was going on inside the restaurant. I looked around the room casually while I was eating, but no one showed any interest in me. Which meant that if one of, or some of, or all of, the rest of the people who had run Drumm out to town were inside the restaurant right now, and Hal had told them about the conversation he had had with me when I had arrived here in Ville, and when I had checked into the Lodge, then that would mean that they wouldn't be having anything to hide. And if they had nothing to hide, then that meant that they had done what they had had to do with their running Drumm out of town, or they're going to do something later, or they're doing something right now, but they have to act like they've got nothing to hide so they won't arouse suspicion.

Valerie brought me my steak, and then I dug right into it and kept track of time. I didn't want to miss the movie I had decided to see.

For dessert I had chocolate ice cream. And washed it down with more coffee.

I felt better after I had eaten. Now I was having more coffee and continued talking to Valerie whenever she came back to me and waited on me. Although there was nothing wrong with what she was saying or doing. She was still behaving the same way the other people who had run Drumm out of town were behaving.

I continued watching the room and talking to Valerie while I had more coffee. But everything was the same as before. No different.

I stayed until it was time for me to go see my movie. Then I left a nice tip on the table, and then I paid the check and left.

I was here at the Sundown Theatre now. I paid for my ticket and went in. Now I was sitting inside the auditorium and watching the previews of the coming attractions. I liked seeing them before I see the movie I want to see. And I had gotten here in plenty of time to see them.

I was watching the movie I wanted to see now. It was called Clement. Clement was about a private detective who specialized in arranged occurrences.

I was walking out of the theatre now. I had finished seeing the movie. I liked it. Now I was walking back to the motel. Along the way I saw something that got my attention. Although I didn't look, sound, or act alarmed when I saw it. I couldn't. If I did, my expression would give me away. And I could have that.

There was no one standing outside my motel room and at my car. And my bag wasn't packed and standing next to my car, either. Which meant that no one was going to run *me* out of town.

I thought about that. If no one were going to run *me* out of town, then that would mean that *I* hadn't done anything to make those people who had run Drumm out of town run *me* out of town. And they had done what they had had to do that had to do with their running Drumm out of town. Or they're going to do something that had to do with their running Drumm out of town later, or they're doing something that had to do with their running Drumm out of town right now, but they have to look, sound, and act like they have nothing to hide so they won't arouse suspicion while they're doing this something right now.

I reached my motel room and unlocked it, and then I went into the room and closed the door and turned on the light and looked around the room. Everything looked the same as when I had left it. Then I turned the TV on and searched the room to see if it had been bugged while I had been gone, or if the phone had been bugged or tapped while I had been gone, or if the room had been searched while I had been gone, or if someone had done something else inside my room while I had been gone.

The room was clean. It wasn't bugged or searched, and it looked like no one had been inside my room and had done something, and the phone was clean. It hadn't been tapped.

Well, all these things had told me something: it had told me the same things about Drumm's being run out of town that the other things had told me: they had done what they had wanted to do when they had run Drumm out of town, or they're going to do something later, now that they had run Drumm out of town, or they are doing something right now, now that they had run Drumm out of town, but they have to be careful not to look, sound, or act like they had something to hide so they won't arouse suspicion.

There wasn't anything else about my assignment I could tonight, so I decided to stay in for the rest of the evening. Then I set up my motel room for burglar alarm the same way I had done it before, and then I got undressed and got into my pajamas and turned the light off, and then I got on the bed and watched TV.

After a while, I put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I turned the TV off and got into bed without setting the alarm clock. I had to refrain from setting the alarm clock. To make it look like I was on vacation. But tomorrow, I was going to continue conducting my investigation the way I had planned.

CHAPTER IV

The next day, I was driving over to the place that Drumm saw those people take the things into from their cars. I had had breakfast at Meal Time and had had another nice friendly conversation with Valerie while she had been waiting on me, and while I had had breakfast, the result of that visit with her was the same as before: she was acting like she had nothing to hide. Now I reached the place that Drumm had seen those people take the things into from their cars, and then I pulled off of the road and onto the shoulder and parked my car here. Then I took my binoculars out of my glove compartment and looked at the place that Drumm had seen those people take the things into that place from their cars through the binoculars. The place was white, one storey high, rectangular, and it had a blue gray roof and a matching garage. Then I stopped suddenly and looked. I found this interesting.

There was a FOR RENT sign sticking out of the front yard of the place. Then I took my cell phone out of my pocket and called Drumm at work and told him I had just seen the place Drumm had seen those people take those things into from their cars. "When you saw those people take those things into that place from their cars," I then asked Drumm. "did you also see a FOR RENT sign in the front yard of the place?"

"No, I didn't," answered Drumm.

"That's what I thought. If those people took those things into the place from their cars while the sign was in the ground, and someone saw them do it, that someone would wonder what they were doing, and he might even look into it. And he might even call the police. It'd be illegal what they were doing. So to keep someone from seeing what they did, they removed the FOR RENT sign and hid it somewhere, and then they took that stuff into the place from their cars, and then they did what they did inside that place, and after they did what they did inside that place, they put the FOR RENT sign back where they had found it and left the place. That would explain why you didn't see the FOR RENT sign at that place when you drove by the place and saw what those people did."

"Yeah. Anyone who drove by that place and saw what they did would think that they own the place and were moving into it."

"That's right. That's what they wanted people to think while they did what they did. Well. Right now I'm going to go search that place. After I've done that, I'll let you know what I've found."

"All right."

"Bye,"

"Bye,"

Then Drumm and I hung up, and then I put my cell phone back into my pocket, and then I started up my car and drove across the street and into the driveway of the place that those places had taken their stuff into from their cars. Then I stopped when I pulled into the driveway and got out of my car and looked down at the ground. I saw tire tracks on the ground. I took my camera out of my pocket and photographed these tire tracks. These tire

tracks may belong to the cars of the people who had taken those things into the place from their cars. After I photographed the tire tracks, I put my camera back into my pocket and got back into my car and drove up to the place.

When I got here, I parked my car in front of the place and got out. Then I looked down at the ground. I saw more of the same kind of tire tracks I had seen in the driveway of this place. I also saw some footprints leading up to and from the place and going out of the place. I took my camera out of my pocket and photographed them. These footprints may belong to the people who had taken those things into the place from their cars. After I photographed the tire tracks and the footprints, I put my camera back into my pocket, and then I looked at the FOR RENT sign. Then I took my pen and notebook out of my pocket and wrote down in my notebook everything it said on the sign. I may want to talk to the person who was renting this place. I don't know what good it'd do, but that was the way it was in investigation: you have to check everything. After I wrote down in my notebook everything that was written on the sign, I put my pen and notebook back into my pocket, and then I went to the place to go into it and took my leather gloves out of my pocket and put them on.

I discovered that the door to the place was locked. Then I looked around to make sure that no one was going to see me pick the lock of the front door of the place. No one did. Then I took my lock pick set out of my pocket and picked the lock of the front door of the place. Then I went into the place and put my lock pick set back into my pocket and looked around.

Although it was dark inside the room I was standing in now, I could see inside this room. This room was no doubt the living room. Although there was nothing inside the room. Then I walked through the rest of the place and checked all of the other rooms inside the place. But there was nothing inside *these* rooms. The entire place was unoccupied. I also turned the lights on to see if there were any electricity. There wasn't any. Then I turned the lights off and left the place and snuck into the garage.

It was dark here inside the garage. And because of this, I took my penlight out of my pocket and turned it on and shined the light into the room and looked around it.

Like the other place, there was nothing inside the garage. The entire garage was completely unoccupied. There wasn't even a car inside the garage. Then I looked around for a light switch to turn it on and see if there were any electricity inside the place.

I found the light switch and turned it on. No light. Which meant that there was no electricity. Then I turned the switch off and left the garage and turned my penlight off and put it back into my pocket and looked around in the back yard of the place. Nothing here. Then I took my gloves off and put them back into my pocket and went back to my car and got into it and started it up and left the place. I was done here.

When I was as far away from the place as I could get, I pulled off of the road and onto the shoulder and parked my car here and took my cell phone out of my pocket and called Drumm and told him what I had found at the place. "And that's what it looks like," I said after I had finished. "they removed the FOR RENT sign and hid it somewhere, and then they did what they did inside the house, and after they did what they did inside the house, they erased all

evidence of what they did inside the house, and then they put the FOR RENT sign back where they found it and left. They did what they had to do there. But it looks like what they did at that place didn't take very long. If it were going to take longer for them to do what they did at that place, they would have told the person who was renting the place that they'd like to rent the place so they could do what they did at the place. So it looks like they did what they did without the knowledge or permission of the person who wants to rent the place. And I think I figured something out: when you saw those people taking the stuff into the house from their cars, you must have seen something peculiar. And they must have seen what you did and realize that you would wonder about it what it was they were doing, and you might even look into it. And they couldn't have that. So they had to find out if you were going to wonder about and might even look into it. One of them must have followed you so they could find out who you are and keep you from wondering about what they did and keep you from looking into it. Then the person who followed you must have seen you check into the Lodge and told his friends, and then his friends told the people who ran you out of town to run you out of town so you couldn't wonder about what it was those people at the house did, and before the people ran you out of town, the person who followed you continued following you and watching until those people ran you out of town. This would explain when and why those people ran you out of town. But it doesn't tell us what you saw those people do out at that house. And it doesn't tell us who wanted you run out of town, either. And now I'm going to have to call Captain Davis and tell *him* what I found out out at that place. He will need to know. Since it looks like there were two illegal acts instead of one: those people trespassed onto that property that that person wants to rent, and those other people who ran you out of town illegally."

"Yeah,"

"I also found and took some pictures of some tire tracks and some footprints I found at that house. The tire tracks may belong to the cars of those people who took those things into the house from their cars, and the footprints may belong to the people who took those things into the house from their cars. And I will need to tell Captain Davis about these footprints and these tire tracks. And I may talk to the person who's renting the house. I don't know what good that'll do, but we've got to check everything."

"Of course. Anything else, Mr. Hurley?"

"No, that's it. I'll get back to you when I can."

"All right. Bye."

"Bye,"

Then Drumm and I hung up, and then I looked at my watch. Eleven minutes to noon.

I had time to call Davis and ask him if I can go over to his office and tell him what I had discovered at the house Drumm had seen those people take those things into from their cars. So I called him at his office and told him I'd like to meet him so I could tell him what I had found out at that house Drum had seen those people take those things into from their cars, and then Davis and I agreed on where and when we could have the meeting, and then he and I

hung up. After that, I put my cell phone back into my pocket, and then I started up my car so I could go to Tacoma and keep my appointment with Davis.

I was here in Tacoma, and here at the police station, and here inside Davis's office now, standing in front of Davis's big mahogany desk, while Davis himself was standing behind his desk, and he and I were shaking hands and smiling at each other. Davis's grip was firm.

Davis was tall, robust, had dark brown hair, a dimply face, and he was wearing a black suit and a green shirt and a red tie with black diamonds.

Davis and I were sitting down now.

I told Davis everything I had discovered out at the house those people had taken those things into from their cars, and I also showed him the pictures of the tire tracks and the footprints that were still inside my camera.

"I see," Davis said after I had finished. "Well, I'll need to have copies of those pictures made."

"I understand. And I will be taking to the person who rents that house. I don't know what good it'll do, but we need to check everything."

"I know. But *I'll* do that. Since it looks like one crime was committed out there at that house."

"Yeah. Trespassing."

"Yeah. But we still don't know what the other crime was that was committed out there, the one that was committed inside the place."

"Well, if those people did what they did out at that place without the knowledge or permission of the person who wants to rent the place, then it has to be something that they don't want the person who wants to rent that place or anyone else to know about."

"Of course," Then I took my notebook out of my pocket and tore off of the book the sheet of paper I had written the name and phone number of the person who wanted to rent the place and gave it to Davis. Then Davis looked at it. "Stephanie Graham," he then read the name of the person who wanted to rent that place.

"Yeah," I confirmed. "And when you call her and tell her about what happen out at that place, try to be discreet about it. I still need to work undercover on this assignment."

Davis smiled. Then he spoke to me: "I'll be as discreet as I can."

I smiled, too. Then I spoke to him: "Thank you."

"You're welcome,"

I was walking through the police department now. Davis had gotten the copies of the pictures of the tire tracks and the footprints he had needed and gave me back my camera, and then I had left his office so I could leave police headquarters and get back into my car and go back to Ville and resume my assignment. Now I walked out of the police department and into the parking lot and over to my car and unlocked my car and got into it and took my cell phone out of my pocket and called Drumm and told him what Davis and I had talked about at our meeting. Then I told Drumm that I was going to go back to Ville and resume my assignment.

Then we hung up and I put my cell phone back into my pocket. Then I started up my car and pulled out of the parking lot and turned onto the street and drove down the street.

As I drove down the street, I looked around for a place to eat at. I *was* getting hungry, so I might as well get something to eat before I go back to Ville and resume my assignment.

I was at that place now. Sitting at a booth and sipping coffee and waiting for the meal I had ordered to come. I also thought about what I could do next in the investigation that might help. Then I came up with an idea. Then I took my cell phone out of my pocket and called Drumm and told him what that idea was and how and where and when I'd like for it to be executed. Then we hung up. After that I called Craig Pritchard and told him what I was working on and who my client was and what I had discovered so far in the investigation, and then I told him what my idea was for what I could next in the investigation that might help, and when and how and where I wanted the idea to be executed. "After I've executed this idea," I said after I had finished. "I'll tell you. Then I'd like for you to put Drumm and his secretary under twenty four hour protective and investigative surveillance. In case someone from Ville goes up to Bellingham and does something to Drumm and his secretary."

"All right," Craig said. "Anything else, Frank?"

"No, that's it. Thanks, Craig."

"You're welcome, Frank. Bye."

"Bye,"

Then Craig and I hung up, and then I called Davis and told *him* what my idea was for helping out in the investigation and where and when and how it was to be executed, and that I had told Craig and Drumm this idea, and what I had asked Craig to do after I pull off the idea. Then Davis and I hung up.

I was eating my meal now: a hot chicken sandwich. And I washed it down with more coffee. For dessert I had apple pie a la mode.

I felt better after I had eaten. Now I was having more coffee. Then I finished the coffee and left a nice tip on the table, and then I paid the check and left the restaurant and got back into my car and started it up, and then I drove out of the parking lot so I could go back to Ville and resume my assignment.

CHAPTER V

When I arrived here in Ville, I turned into the driveway of the Lodge and pulled up in front of my motel room and my parked my car. Then I got out of my car and locked it, and then I went into the Office and asked Hal for my key and asked him if I got any mail. Hal was working today.

My key was in my box. When Hal turned to get my key and see if I had gotten any mail, I quickly and silently took my gun that shot bugs out of my pocket, and then I aimed the gun at the ceiling above the front desk, and then I shot the bug into the ceiling, and then I put my gun back into my pocket. Then Hal turned around and gave me the key and told me I hadn't gotten any mail. Then I thanked him and left the Office and went back to my room and unlocked the door and went in, and then I went over to the TV and turned it on, and then I took the radio to the bug I put inside the front desk of the Office out of my pocket, and then I took an earphone out of my pocket, and then I plugged the earphone into the radio, and then I turned on the radio, and then I listened in on what was going on inside the front desk so I could test the radio. I could hear everything that Hal was saying and doing in the Office. I smiled. I was satisfied. The bug was working. Then I turned off the radio and put it and the earphone back into my pocket. I wasn't going to need to use the radio now. But I *was* going to need to use it when the time comes. Then I turned on the light and searched the room to see if it had been bugged or searched or if someone had done else inside the room while I had been out, and checked the phone to see if it had been tapped while I had been out.

The room was clean. No bugs. No search. And nothing else that indicated that something had happened here inside my motel room while I had been out, and the phone was clean, too. It hadn't tapped while I had been out. Then I set up the room for intruder alert the same way I had done before, and then I got undressed and went into the bathroom and shaved and showered, and then I went back into the bedroom and got into my pajamas and turned off the light and sat on the bed and continued watching TV and thought about my new encounter with Hal when I had gone into the Office and had launched my idea of what to do next in the investigation. He had acted the same way he had acted the last time I had seen him. No different. He still acted like he had nothing to hide.

I watched TV until I got sleepy, and then I turned the TV off and set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up tonight, and then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I got into bed and went to sleep.

The alarm clock rang. I turned it off and looked at the time. The clock told me it was the time I had wanted to get up at. Then I got out of the bed and got out of my pajamas and got into my street clothes and disassembled the set up I had for intruder alert and stepped out of the room and closed and locked the door, and then I walked over to Meal Time so I could have dinner.

When I reached Meal Time, I walked into the restaurant and looked around. It was busy. And so was Valerie. She was working tonight. Waiting on tables. I looked around for a table, and then I found a booth, and then I walked over to it and sat down at it.

Valerie appeared and smiled and gave me a menu.

"Hello," she said and smiled. "Back again."

"Yeah," I said. I smiled, too. "I just can't stay away. I'd like some coffee."

"All right," Then Valerie disappeared.

And I looked at the menu and thought about the new encounter I had just had with Valerie. It was the same as the other ones. No different. Which meant that she was still acting like she had nothing to hide.

Valerie returned with my coffee and set the cup of coffee on the table and left while I still looked at the menu. Then I sipped the coffee and continued looking at the menu.

When I reached a decision on what I wanted for dinner, I flagged Valerie down and she came over to the booth and took my order and left, and I continued sipping the coffee and waited for my meal to come.

I was facing the front of the restaurant again. Which was what I wanted to do while I was here. But I still saw the same thing I had seen before the last time I had been here. Which was nothing. No one was showing any interest in me. Which meant that if the people who had run Drumm out of town were here inside the restaurant, or if some of, or one of them, were here in the restaurant, and if the people who had taken those things into that house from their cars, or some of them, or one of them, were here inside the restaurant, too, then that would mean that they, too, had nothing to hide.

Valerie returned with my meal and placed it before me and left, and then I dug right into my meal: chicken fried steak. And I washed it down with more coffee. And for dessert I had chocolate ice cream and washed *that* down with more coffee.

I felt better after I had eaten. Now I was having more coffee. Then I finished the coffee and left a nice tip on the table, and then I paid the check and left the restaurant and went back to my motel room and unlocked the door and went into the room and turned on the TV and search the room again. And the room was the same as it had been before. Clean. So was the phone when I examined that. It wasn't tapped. Then I set up the room for intruder alert the same way I had done it before and got undressed and turned off the light and got on the bed and continued watching TV until I got sleepy, and then I turned the TV off and put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I got into bed and went to sleep without setting the alarm clock. Because I couldn't set the alarm clock this time. Because I had to make look like I was on vacation.

The next morning, I was here at Meal Time having a delicious ham and scrambled egg and hash brown breakfast, and washing it down with orange juice and coffee, and having another wonderful chat with Valerie while she waited on me, and this encounter with her was the same as the others. No different. She still acted like she had nothing to hide.

I felt better after I had eaten. Now I was having more coffee. Then I finished my coffee and left a nice tip on the table, and then I paid my check and left the restaurant, and then I went back to the Lodge and went into the Office and gave Hal my key so I wouldn't have it with me while I was going to be out, and then I left the Office and got into my car and started it up, and then I left the Lodge and turned onto the street and drove down the street and through town, and then I drove got out of town, and when I was as far away from town as I wanted to be, I pulled over somewhere and parked my car, and then I took my cell phone out of my pocket and called Drumm and told him he can execute the next phase of my idea in what I could do next in my investigation. Then we hung up. After that I put my cell phone back into my pocket, and then I took out of my pocket the radio to the bug I had put inside the Office and took the earphone out of the radio so I could listen in on what would be said or done or both at the Office, and then I put the radio on the front seat of my car, and then I took my pocket size tape recorder out of my pocket and put *that* on the front seat of the car in case I'd have to record something I'd hear in the Office, and then I took my pen and notebook out of my pocket in case I'd have to write something down and put *them* on the front seat of my car. Then I started listening in on the Office. Then, I heard something. I listened.

The phone at the Office was ringing.

"Good morning," Hal said when he picked up the receiver. "The Lodge."

"Good morning," Drumm said. "Frank Hurley's room, please."

"Mr. Hurley is not in right now. He came into the Office and gave me his key so he could leave his key here while he's out."

"You mean that's he's still staying at the Lodge?"

"That's correct, sir."

"Well, I'd like to leave him a message."

"All right."

"Tell him that Robert Drumm called and that I'd like to talk to him about something. He knows my phone number. That's the message."

"All right. I'll see that he gets the message. Anything else, sir?"

"No, that's it. Thank you."

"You're welcome. And thank you for calling."

"You're welcome," Then Hal hung up.

So did Drumm.

Then I took my cell phone out of my pocket and called Drumm and told him I had heard him execute the next phase of my idea on what to do next in the investigation, and then we hung up, and then I called Craig and Davis and told them Drumm had just executed the next phase of my idea on what to do next in the investigation, and then we hung up, and then I put my cell phone back into my pocket and continued listening in on the Office. Then, I heard something and listened and turned on the tape recorder.

A phone number was being dialed. The radio to the bug I had planted inside the Office had a device inside it that recorded phone numbers. And it recorded the phone number that was being dialed, and I wrote the phone number down in my notebook.

"Hello?" a voice said.

"Hello," Hal said. "Sid?"

"Yeah?"

"Hal,"

"Hal. How are you doin'?"

Then Hal told Sid about the phone conversation he had just had with Drumm.

"So," Sid said after Hal had finished. "Probably nothing."

"Although this is the second time we've heard about Drumm. That first time we heard about Drumm was when this Frank Hurley came to the Lodge and checked in and said that he and Drumm were going to spend their vacations here in Ville, but Drumm hasn't showed up. And then Hurley asked me to let him know when Drumm shows up."

"That was nothing at that time. But if Drumm *does* come here to Ville and spends his vacation with Hurley, that won't bother us if we keep our heads. As long as we continue acting like nothing has happened, we'll be out of the woods. And then Drumm and Hurley will leave Ville and go home. And that'll be the end of it. But it wouldn't hurt to find out who this Hurley is. We didn't find out who he is when you told me he came here to Ville and checked into the Lodge and he was going to spend his vacation with Drumm."

"I know,"

"We already know who Drumm is. We had to find out about him when he saw the rest of us taking that stuff into the house outside town. Although he couldn't see what it was we took into the house."

"Yeah, but he looked at it so long when we saw him doing it and when he was driving into town that we had to follow him and find out who he is to keep him from finding out what we did because we thought he might find out what we did and look into it."

"That' right. And then we found out who he is and that he stayed at the Lodge because he was passing through, and then we ran him out of town so we could keep him from finding out what we did."

"Yeah. And then later, he came back with the police and the police questioned us about our running Drumm out of town, but we denied we ran him out of town, and that was the end of it. The police left. There wasn't anything about what Drumm said we did that they could do anything about. Case closed."

"Of course. All right. I'll do what you say: I'll keep my head."

"Good. And I'll tell everyone else to do the same. They will need to know about this new phone conversation you had with Drumm. And we be prepared for Drumm--if he comes back here to Ville."

"Of course,"

"And give Hurley that message from Drumm when he goes back to the Lodge. There's no reason not to."

"I'll do that,"

"Good. Anything else, Hal?"

"No, that's it."

"All right. Thanks for calling, Hal,"

"You're welcome, Sid,"

"Bye,"

"Bye,"

Then Hal and Sid hung up. After that I wrote Sid's name down in my notebook next to the phone number that Hal had dialed and that I had written down in my notebook, and then I turned the tape recorder off. There wasn't anything else going on inside the Office. Then I thought. Sid had to be Sid Wellman, one of the people who had run Drumm out of town. Although Sid nor Hal hadn't mentioned Sid's last name. And Sid nor Hal hadn't mentioned Hal's last name, either. Then I rewound the tape on the recorder, and then I got out my cell phone and called Drumm and told him about the phone conversation that Sid and Hal had had after Drumm had executed the last phase in my idea on what to do next in the investigation, and then I told Drumm I had recorded the phone conversation, and that I'll play the tape, and then I turned the tape recorder on and placed the tape recorder near the phone so Drumm could hear the recording.

"So it looks as though those people ran you out of town because you were watching what they were doing out at that house outside town," I said after Drumm and I had finished listening to the recording of the phone conversation that Sid and Hal had had after Drumm had executed the last phase of my idea on what to do next in the investigation, and after I turned the tape recorder off.

"Yeah," Drumm confirmed.

"Yeah. And now I'll need to call Lieutenant Pritchard and Captain Davis and tell them you executed the last phase of my idea on what to do next in the investigation and what we heard in the recording of the phone conversation that Sid and Hal had after you executed the last phase of my idea on what to do next in the investigation before I execute the next phase of my idea on what to do next in the investigation. It looks as though we'll still need to execute the next phase of my idea on what to do next in the investigation because of what we just heard in the recording."

"Yeah."

"Yeah. As for you, you go back to what you're doing. I'll keep you posted."

"All right. Anything else, Mr. Hurley?"

"No, that's it. Bye, Mr. Drumm."

"Bye, Mr. Hurley,"

Then Drumm and I hung up, and then I rewound the tape on the recorder, and then I called Craig and told him that Drumm had executed the last phase of my idea on what to do

next in the investigation, and what had happened after that, and that I had recorded the phone conversation of what Sid and Hal had talked about after Drumm had executed the last phase of my idea on what to do next in the investigation.

"Well," Craig said after he and I had finished listening to the recording of what Sid and Hal had talked about after Drumm had executed the last phase of my idea on what to do next in the investigation, and after I turned the tape recorder off. "It *does* look like those people ran Drumm out of town for that reason."

"Yeah," I agreed. "But because of what we just heard, we'll still have to execute the next phase in my idea on what to do next in the investigation."

"Yeah."

"Yeah," Then I told Craig about the phone conversation I had just had with Drumm about what we had heard in the recording of the phone conversation that Sid and Hal had had.

"Yeah," Craig said after I had finished.

"Yeah. But I think you should go ahead as planned on when to put Drumm and his secretary under twenty four hour protective and investigative surveillance. If these people act like they've got nothing to hide, then they're not going to go up to Bellingham and do whatever it is they need to do to Drumm and his secretary. They wouldn't have any reason to."

"I see,"

"So until you hear from me, you continue doing what you're doing now."

"All right."

"Good. Now. I'd better call Captain Davis and tell him Drumm had executed the last phase of my idea on what to do next in the investigation and what happened after that."

"Yeah. Good luck, Frank."

"Thanks, Craig,"

Then Craig and I hung up, and then I rewound the tape on the recorder, and then I called Davis and told *him* Drumm had executed the last phase of my idea on what to do next in the investigation, and what had happened after that, and then I played the recording of what had happened after that.

"Well," Davis said after he and I had finished listening to the recording, and after I turned the tape recorder off. "It *does* look like those people ran Drumm out of town because of what Drumm did."

"Yeah," I confirmed. "But we'll still need to execute the next phase of my idea on what to do next in the investigation because of what we just heard in the recording."

"I know."

Then I told Davis about the phone conversation I had just had with Drumm, and about the phone conversation I had just had with Craig.

"Yeah," Davis said after I had finished. "Well, I told Stephanie Graham that we looked into what happened out at that place that she wants to rent, and what we discovered out there, and she was not happy to hear about it."

"I imagine she wouldn't be,"

"No, she wouldn't be. I also told her that we're going to continue looking into what happened."

"Yeah,"

"Then she said that from now on she's going to check up on that place more often."

"I think that's a good idea."

"Yeah. Especially if someone else wants to use that place to do something there."

"Yeah. There is that possibility. But I don't think that the people who ran Drumm out of town are going to use that place again or use any other place to do something there. I think they did what they wanted to do. They won't do anything else. And they're not doing anything else, either. But we'll find out."

"Of course. I'm going to run a check on this Hal."

"Yeah. We will need to know about him. Since we found out he was in on that plot to run Drumm out of town with the rest of those people."

"Of course. Anything else, Mr. Hurley?"

"No, that's it. Bye."

"Bye,"

Then Davis and I hung up, and then I called Drumm and Craig and told them about the phone conversation I had just had with Davis. Then we hung up, and then I put my cell phone back into my pocket. Then I looked at my watch. Eleven minutes to twelve.

I had time to go back to the Lodge and execute the next phase of my idea on what to do next in the investigation today. The important thing was that I execute the next phase when Hal would be there. It could only work well when Hal would be there. But first I was going to need to go somewhere and get some food to go. I had the feeling that after I execute the next phase of my idea on what to do next in the investigation, I was going to be on the go. And because of this, I was need to need to eat on the go instead of eat at a restaurant. So I started up my car, and then I pulled onto the road, and then I drove down the road and looked around for a restaurant to get some food to go from.

CHAPTER VI

I was here at that restaurant now. Sitting at a booth and waiting for my food to go to be prepared. I had already paid for it. I also listened in on the Office, but this time the earphone was attached to the radio, and the radio was in my pocket, and the earpiece of the earphone was in my ear. And my tape recorder was in my pocket, too. And a cord was plugged into it, and the other end of the cord was plugged to the radio. So I'd be able to record whatever it was I'd hear at the Office without being seen doing it, and without being seen listening in on the Office. Then, I heard something. I listened and quickly took the tape recorder out of my pocket and looked at it and turned it on, and then I put it back into my pocket and continued listening in on the Office.

A phone was ringing.

"Hello?" it was Hal.

"Hello. Hal?" it was Sid.

"Yeah?"

"It's Sid. I ran that check on Hurley. He lives in Bellingham, and he's a private detective, and he looks into anything secret or illegal."

"Really?"

"Yeah."

"Well, then if he is a private investigator, and if he *does* look into anything secret or illegal, and if he is a friend of Drumm's, then maybe Hurley is looking into Drumm being run out of town, but he's doing that undercover."

"Yeah. There is that possibility. Or maybe there's the possibility that Drumm did or did not tell Hurley that we ran Drumm out of town, but Hurley's not looking into our running Drumm out of town. Maybe Hurley really is taking his vacation here in Ville, and Drumm's going to join him and take *his* vacation here in Ville. But we can't ask him which of the two he's doing. If we do, we'll tip our hand. And we can't have that. So the best thing we can do is go ahead as planned: we keep our heads and take care of our businesses, but we keep our eyes and ears open. Just in case. If Hurley is looking into our running Drumm out of town, and he's working undercover on this, we'll know. He'll have to say or do something to indicate he is looking into our running Drumm out of town."

"Yeah,"

"Yeah,"

"All right. I'll do what you say, Sid."

"Good. We're almost out of the woods. But I don't think Hurley's going to find out we ran Drumm out of town and why. The police didn't. No one else will. We made sure of that. You know that.

"Yes, I do,"

"So just keep your cool and take care of your business and keep your eyes and ears open and nothing will happen."

"I'll do that. Anything else, Sid."

"No, that's it. Bye, Hal,"

"Bye, Sid,"

Then Hal and Sid hung up, and then I took my tape recorder out of my pocket and turned it off. Nothing else was going on inside the Office. But I continued listening in on the Office and put the tape recorder back into my pocket.

My food to go came, and then I collected it and left the restaurant and got into my car and started it up, and then I left the restaurant, and when I was far away from the restaurant as I wanted to be, I pulled over somewhere and parked the car and took my tape recorder out of my pocket and rewound the tape, and then I called Drumm and told him about the phone conversation I had heard Hal and Sid have about Sid's running his check on me, and played the recording of that conversation.

"Boy, they act like they've got nothing to hide," Drumm said after we had finished listening to the recording, and after I turned the tape recorder off.

"Yeah," I said. "But they're playing it safe by keep their tabs on me while they continue acting like they've got nothing to hide."

"In other words, they're being cautious,"

"That's right. And we'll have to go ahead as planned on finding out about their running you out of town."

"Yeah,"

"I'll tell Lieutenant Pritchard and Captain Davis about this conversation, and have them listen to the recording of this conversation. *You* continue doing what you're doing now."

"All right. Anything else, Mr. Hurley?"

"No. That's it, Mr. Drumm. Bye."

"Bye."

Then Drumm and I hung up, and then I rewound the tape on the recorder, and then I called Craig and told *him* about the phone conversation I had heard Hal and Sid have about Sid's running his check on me and played the recording of that conversation, and that I had told Drumm about the conversation and had played the recording of the conversation to Drumm.

"Well," Craig said after we had finished listening to the recording, and after I finished rewinding the tape on the recorder. "It looks like they want to play it safe and tabs on you while they wait for the heat to die down."

"Yeah," I said. "It looks that way. Because of this, we'll have to go ahead as planned on finding out why those people Drumm out of town. We can't do anything different. So you put Drumm and his secretary under twenty four hour investigative and protective surveillance when I tell you to." Then I told Craig I was going to call Davis and tell *him* about the phone conversation I had just heard Sid and Hal have about Sid's running his check on me, and that I had played the recording of the conversation to Drumm. After that, we hung up, and then I rewound the tape on the recorder, and then I called Davis and told *him* about the phone

conversation I had just heard Hal and Sid have about Sid's running his check on me, and then I played the recording of that conversation.

"Yeah," Davis said after we had finished listening to the recording, and after I had finished rewinding the tape on the recorder.

"Yeah," *I* said. "It looks as though we'll have to go ahead as planned on finding out why those people ran Drumm out of town."

"Yeah. I agree. Although it does look like there's something different this time: they're going to keep tabs on you while they play it safe and act like they've got nothing to hide."

"Yeah."

"Yeah. O.K. We go ahead as planned on finding out why those people ran Drumm out of town."

"Yeah," Then I told Davis about the phone conversations I had had with Craig and Drumm about the phone conversation I had heard Hal and Sid have about Sid's running his check on me, and that I had played the recording of that conversation to them.

"Anything else, Mr. Hurley?" Davis asked after I had finished.

"No. That's it. Bye, Captain,"

"Bye,"

Then we hung up, and then I put my cell phone back into my pocket, and then I put my tape recorder back into my pocket, and then I started up my car, and then I pulled onto the road and drove down it so I could go back to the Lodge and execute the next phase of my idea on what to do next in the investigation.

A few minutes later, my cell phone rang. I took it out of my pocket and said hello.

It was Davis. He told me he had run his check on Hal. Hal's last name was Cooper, and he had lived in other parts of the United States, moving around from one place to another, doing various jobs, then he was drafted into the Army, was later honorably discharged from the Army, continued moving around from one place to another, continued doing various jobs, then one day he moved to Ville and went to work at the Office of the Lodge, had been working there ever since, was still working at the Office of the Lodge.

"Boy," I said after Davis had finished. "He must like it there if he's not moving around and doing various jobs anymore."

"Yeah," Davis said. "We haven't found out anything about those tire tracks and footprints you photographed yet, but we're still looking. Those tires of those tracks could be on anyone's car. Lots of people would be using those kind of tires."

"I know,"

"And the shoes of those footprints could belong to anyone."

"I know. This doesn't narrow down the field."

"I know."

"But we'll keep looking."

"And if *I* find out anything about those tire tracks and footprints, I'll tell you."

"Thanks. I'd appreciate it."

"Anything else, Captain?"

"No, that it. Bye, Mr. Hurley."

"Bye, Captain,"

Then Davis and I hung up, and then I put my cell phone back into my pocket.

So now we had found out what we had needed to know about Hal. I liked that.

I reached the Lodge and pulled into the driveway and parked my car in front of *my* motel room, and then I got out of my car and locked it, and then I went into the Office and gave Hal my key and asked him if I got any mail.

He said I did, and then he took the letter out of my box and gave it to me, and then I thanked Hal and left the Office and went back to my motel room and unlocked the door and went into the room. Then I looked around the room. Then I went over to the TV and turned it on, and then I searched the entire room for bugs and phone taps and signs of anything else that had been done inside my motel room while I had been gone.

There were no bugs inside my motel room, and the phone wasn't tapped, and there were no signs of anything else that had been done inside my motel room while I had been out.

In other words, the room was clean.

Then I sat down on the bed and read the message I had gotten. It *was* from Drumm. Saying he had called me and told me to call him. Then I picked up the receiver of the phone inside the room and called Drumm.

"Hello?" Drumm said.

"Hello," *I* said. "Bob?"

"Yeah?"

"Frank Hurley."

"Frank. How are you?"

"Fine. You?"

"Fine."

"I got your message, saying you wanted to call you."

"Yes. I want to let you know that I'll still be able to go down there to Ville and take my vacation with you. I need to take care of some things up here, and then I'll come right down."

"Great. Lookin' forward to seeing you."

"I'm looking forward to seeing you."

"Good. Talk to you then, Bob."

"Talk to you then, Frank."

Then Drumm and I hung up. After that I turned the TV off and stepped out of my motel room and locked the door, and then I went back to the office and asked for my key.

Hal was still here at the Office. He was still standing behind the front desk. I asked him for my key and he gave it to me.

"Going out again?" he asked me.

"Yeah," I said. "Oh, that message you gave me? It was from Robert Drumm. It looks like he's going to be able to come down here to Ville and spend his vacation with me."

"Oh, really?"

"Yes. He needs to take care of some things up in Bellingham, and after he does that, he's going to come down here to Ville and spend his vacation with me."

"Well, that's nice,"

"Yes, it is. Bye now."

"Bye,"

Then I left the Office and went back to my car and unlocked it and got into it, and then I took my tape recorder and the radio to the bug inside the Office out of my pocket and put them on the front seat of my car, and then I turned on the radio to the bug inside the Office and listen in on the Office, and then I started up my car, and then I pulled out of the driveway and turned onto the street and drove down the street and through and out of town, listening in on the Office, and when I was as far away from town as I wanted to be, I pulled over somewhere and parked my car and continued listening in on the Office. Then, I heard something. Then I turned the tape recorder on.

A phone was ringing.

"Hello," it was Sid.

"Hello," Hal said. "Sid?"

"Yeah,"

"It's Hal," Then Hal told Sid about the conversation that he and I had had inside the Office about the phone conversation I had had with Drumm inside my motel room.

"So Drumm is coming back here to Ville, huh," Sid said after Hal had finished. "Well, let him. We've got nothing to hide. We made sure of that. The worst that could happen is that he could protest about what he said we did again. But, of course, we act like we don't know what he's talking about again."

"Well, what about Hurley? He is a private detective."

"I know. But he won't find out anything--if he is here in Ville to look into Drumm's being running out of town. The police didn't. And neither did Drumm. But that doesn't mean we don't go ahead as planned. We *do* go ahead as planned: we keep tabs on Hurley while he's here in Ville, and we keep tabs on Drumm after he gets here to Ville, too, and we act like we don't know what Drumm is talking about--if he protests about our running him out of town again--and we act like we have nothing to hide, and we mind our own business and don't ask Hurley or Drumm or the both of them any questions about one of them or both of them looking into our running Drumm out of town. If we do, we'll tip our hands. And we can't do that."

"No. we can't. All right, Sid. I'll do what you say."

"Good. We're almost out of the woods, Hal."

"Yeah, we are,"

"Anything else, Hal?"

"No. That's it."

"All right. Thanks for bringing to my attention that Drumm is coming here back to Ville, Hal."

"You're welcome, Sid."

"Bye."

"Bye,"

Then Hal and Sid hung up. Then *I* turned the tape recorder off. That was the end of the phone conversation that Hal had just had with Sid. And there was nothing else that was going on inside the Office, either. But I still listened in on the Office. I had to. Then I rewound the tape on the recorder and took my cell phone out of my pocket and called Drumm and told him I had executed the last phase of my idea on what to do next in the investigation, and then I told Drumm what I had heard Sid and Hal talk about in their phone conversation, and played the recording of that conversation.

"So it looks like they're going to keep tabs on both you *and* me," Drumm said after he and I had finished listening to the recording, and after I finished rewinding the tape.

"Although they're going to play it safe and act like they've got nothing to hide."

"That's right," *I* said. "They are going to be cautious."

"What do we do now?"

"You continue doing what you're doing now. I'll call Lieutenant Pritchard and Captain Davis and tell them about what I heard Hal and Sid talk about after I executed the last phase of my idea on what to do next in the investigation, and play the recording of what they said to them, and then we'll decide what to do after that and do it. Then I'll call you back and tell you what we've talked about."

"All right. Anything else, Mr. Hurley?"

"No, that is. Bye, Mr. Drumm,"

"Bye, Mr. Hurley."

Then Drumm and I hung up, and then I called Craig and told *him* about what I had heard Hal and Sid talk about in their phone conversation and played the recording of that conversation.

"Well," Craig said after he and I had finished listening to the recording, and after I had finished rewinding the tape. "It looks like they're going to keep tabs on you *and* Drumm while they'll act like they've got nothing to hide."

"That's right," *I* said. "Now you can put Drumm and his secretary under twenty four hour protective and investigative surveillance, and I'll call Captain Davis and tell *him* about this new development." Then I told Craig that I had called Drumm and had told *him* about this new development and played the recording of this development to him.

"Uh-huh," Craig said after I had finished.

Then Craig and I said to goodbye to each other, and then we hung up, and then I rewound the tape on the recorder, and then I called Davis and told *him* about this new development and played the recording of the development.

"So they're going to keep tabs on you *and* Drumm while they'll act like they've got nothing to hide, huh," Davis said after I had finished, and after I had rewound the tape on the recorder.

"That's right," I said. Then I told Davis that I had called Drumm and Craig and told *them* about this new development and played the recording of the development to them.

"Yeah," Davis said after I had finished. "So it looks as though we'll have to go ahead as planned about looking into their running Drumm out of town."

"Yeah," I said.

"And there's something else we can do that might help, too: we could search their places. After I heard the recordings of what they did, I went and got some search warrants."

"Yeah. That *is* a good idea. That might help."

"But we'll have to search their places without their knowing about it since they didn't say what they did at the place outside town. They only admitted that they ran Drumm out of town. And we still have to find out what they did at that place."

"I know. And *I* just thought of something else that might help. That is, if you haven't told anyone else that you looked into that trespassing crime that happened out at that place outside town."

"No, I haven't told anyone else that I looked into that trespassing crime at that place outside town."

"Good. I wonder what would happen if the people who ran Drumm out of town found out that you were looking into the trespassing crime and what you discovered out at that place and that you're still looking into the trespassing crime? They didn't say that you were looking into that trespassing crime and what you discovered out at that place and that you're still looking into the trespassing crime. Which meant that they must not know that you looked into that trespassing crime and what you discovered out at that place and that you're still looking into the trespassing crime."

Davis thought about that. Then he spoke: "Yeah."

"Yeah. When you told Stephanie Graham that you looked into that trespassing crime, what did you tell her? I did ask you to be discreet when you look into it."

"Yes, you did. I told Ms Graham that a man drove by the place and noticed those people at the house taking some things out of their cars and taking those things into the house. Although the person who drove by the place didn't see what it was they were taking into the house from their cars. And he didn't see a FOR RENT sign outside the place, either. Then, when he drove by the place again for some reason, he didn't see the same people there, but he did see the FOR RENT sign outside the place. He wondered about this and reported it and we looked into it and discovered what we discovered out at that place and we're still looking into the trespassing crime."

"Good. Well, that's what you can say when you spread the word saying that you're looking into the trespassing crime and what you discovered out at that place. Then we'll wait and see what happens after that."

"All right. I'll spread the word and you search their places."

"All right. But I'll search their places after I call Craig and Drumm and tell them what we're going to do. They will need to know."

"Of course. Anything else, Mr. Hurley?"

"No, that's it. Bye, Captain."

"Bye, Mr. Hurley,"

Then Davis and I hung up, and then I called Craig and Drumm and told them what Davis and I were going to do.

CHAPTER VII

I was driving over to Sid's home now. I had gone over to the place he worked at to see if he were there so I'd know he wouldn't be at his home so I could sneak inside it and search it and discovered he was at work. Now I reached his home and parked my car across the street from his place.

His place wasn't far from town, and it was a small two storey off white house with a blue gray roof and matching garage that was inside a wooded area.

After I had parked my car, I got out of it and locked it, and then I looked around to see if anyone were going to see me sneak into Sid's place. No one did. Then I crossed the street and went into the wooded area, and when I reached Sid's place, I looked around to make sure that no one would see me sneak into Sid's place. Although I was in a wooded area. Which meant that no one could see what I was going to do. But I looked around out of habit. Then I noticed that no one could see what I was going to do, and then I took my leather gloves out of my pocket and put them on, and then I took my lock pick set out of my pocket and picked the lock of the front door of Sid's place, and then I went into Sid's place and closed and locked the door as quickly and silently as I could. Then I looked all around me. Although it was dark here inside the room I was standing in now, I could still see inside the room. And because of this, I didn't use my penlight.

The room I was standing in now was the living room. It was small, but spacious, and it was off white with a blue gray carpet, and against the wall opposite the front door of the house was a long tan leather couch with a maple brown coffee table before the couch. Lining all of the walls of the living room were black cabinets with various things of interest in the shelves, and opposite the couch, and against the wall, and next to the front door of the house, was a big black TV with matching combination VCR and DVD player.

I walked through the living room in search of another room that I wanted to start my search in, a room that would have answers in.

And like the living room, it was dark inside the room I was standing in now. This room looked like the den. It, too, was small, but spacious, and had four off white walls and a blue gray carpet, and opposite the front door of the den, and next to the window, was a big maple desk.

I went over to the desk and tapped the phone on the desk, and then I put a bug underneath the desk. Then I went behind the desk and sat down inside the big comfortable maple chair and looked through all but one of the drawers of the desk. Nothing in them. Then I came to the drawer I hadn't searched. It was locked. I took my lock pick set out of my pocket and picked the lock of the drawer, and then the drawer opened and I pulled it back. Then I looked inside it. Then I saw a black cash box inside it. I took the cash box out of the drawer and put it on the desk, and then I picked the lock of the cash box and opened the cash box. Then I looked inside the cash box. There were several hundred dollars in cash and some papers and Sid's bank book inside the cash box. I opened up Sid's bank book to look inside it. Then, I saw

something interesting. Sid had made several small deposits into his bank. I noticed the dates these deposits were made. Then I got out my cell phone and called Drumm and asked him when he had been run out of town.

"About three weeks ago," he told me. "Why?"

"Because I just found out that Sid Wellman made some deposits into his bank about three weeks ago," I told Drumm. "I'm inside Wellman's house right now searching it. He keeps a cash box inside his desk inside his den. I got into his cash box to look inside it and noticed his bank book. Then I looked at the bank book. It says that he made several small deposits into his bank about three weeks ago."

"Oh, really?"

"Yeah. And I find that interesting: several small deposits of money into his bank. I wonder where this money came from? I doubt if it came from work. He'd be making deposits into his bank every pay day instead of several times in three weeks."

"Yeah. Well, maybe this money came from whatever it was that Wellman and those other people did out at that house outside town."

"There is that possibility. And whatever it was that they did out at that place outside town must have had to do with money."

"Yeah. But what?"

"I don't know. We'll still have to look into the case to find out."

"Of course."

"Look. I'm going to have to talk to you later. I want to finish searching Wellman's place and search those other people's places and hear back about the rumor we'll be spreading about the investigation of the trespassing crime, then tell you what I found inside all of those places and what we find out from the rumor we spread about the investigation of the trespassing crime. Right now I needed to know when you were run out of town because of those deposits Wellman made into his bank."

"I understand. Good luck on the search and the rumor, Mr. Hurley,"

"Thank you, Mr. Drumm."

Then Drumm and I hung up, and then I put my cell phone back into my pocket, and then I took my camera out of my pocket and photographed all of the dates of the deposits Sid had made inside his bank, and then I closed up the bank book and put it back into the cash box, and then I put my camera back into my pocket, and then I put the cash box back into the drawer I had found it in, and then I locked up the drawer and put my lock pick set back into my pocket. After that I looked around the rest of the den. But I didn't find anything inside the room that could tell me why Drumm had been run out of town. I also knocked on walls and looked behinds things to see if there were any hiding places or hidden panels or trapdoors. I had to. If the people who had run Drumm out of town *were* hiding something, although they were acting like they had nothing to hide, then they must be hiding it in places that were hidden, places that they didn't want anyone else to know about. There was that possibility. A possibility that I didn't want to overlook.

There were no hidden panels or hidden places or trap doors inside the room. Then I came to the closet. I opened it and looked inside it. Although it was dark inside the closet, I could still see inside the closet. It wasn't dark enough inside the closet for me to use my penlight.

Inside the closet were coats on racks and shoes on the floor. Nothing else was inside the closet. Then I looked down at the floor of the closet. It was solid. There was no trap door here. Then I knocked on the walls of the closet. All four walls were solid. Then I noticed something: it was on either side of one of the walls: crevices. Going down the wall. I took my penlight out of my pocket and turned it on, and then I shined the light on one of the crevices and looked at the crevice. There was nothing beyond *this* crevice. It just looked like a long thin line going down. Then I shined the light of my penlight on the other crevice and looked at the crevice. Then, I noticed something. There was a part of a white circle on another wall. It looked like a button. Out of curiosity I took my pocketknife out of my pocket and opened it up, and then I stuck the blade of my knife through the crevice and touched the circle. Then, something happened: the wall moved back a few inches. Then I shined the light of my penlight into the room behind the wall. It looked like a hall. Then, out of curiosity, I pushed the wall back to see if it could be moved back by hand. It could be. Then I stepped into the hall and shined the light of my penlight into the hall and looked all around the hall. I found a light switch on the wall. It was next to the button that opened the wall. I turned it on. The light worked. Then I pushed the wall back into place by hand, and then I turned the light off and shined the light of my penlight into the hall and walked through the hall. Then I came to a room. I looked inside it. I didn't see any windows inside *this* room. Then I looked around for a light switch. And found one. I turned it on. Light flooded the room. Then I turned my penlight off and put it back into my pocket, and then I looked all around the room. It would be all right for me to look into *this* room with the light on and my penlight off. Since there were no windows inside *this* room.

This room wasn't as big as the living room and the den, but it was spacious and had four off white walls, but there was no carpet on the floor. And the floor was made of blond wood. Against some of the walls inside this room were cabinets and benches with photographic equipment and cameras on them. On the ceiling was a red light. I looked around the room for the switch for the red light. And found a switch. I turned it on after I turned the other light switch off. The red light glowed. Then I turned the red light off and turned the other light on. Then I opened the doors of the cabinets to look inside the cabinets. There was more photographic equipment inside the cabinets. Then I closed the doors of the cabinets. Then I saw a door inside this room. I turned the knob to go inside this room, but the door was locked. So I took my lock pick set out of my pocket and picked the lock of the door and went into the room so I could look around this room.

It was dark inside this room. I took my penlight out of my pocket and turned it on and shined the light into the room and looked around in the room. I found a light switch and turned it on. Then the light flooded the room. I looked around the room. This room had four off white walls and a blond wood floor and no windows inside this room. And there were

things inside this room that indicated that this room was some kind of a work room. Then I turned the light off and left the room and closed and locked the door and turned my penlight off and put it back into my pocket. Then I looked inside the room I was standing in now: the one that had the photographic equipment in.

Against another wall inside this room was a shineless blond table with a mirror, and a shineless blond chair inside the knee-hole of the table. Next to the table was a shineless blond dresser. And on the other side of the room was a closet.

I went over to the table with the mirror and sat down at it and unlocked the drawers with my lock pick set and looked through the drawers. All I saw inside one of the drawers was black grease paint. There wasn't anything else inside the other drawers. Then I closed and locked all of the drawers and went over to the dresser to look through the drawers of the dresser. I noticed that all of the drawers of the dresser were locked. So I unlocked the drawers with my lock pick set and looked through the drawers. There were clothes inside them. All of them were black. There were wool caps and long sleeve turtle neck sweaters and pants and leather gloves. There wasn't anything else inside the drawers. So I closed up all of the drawers and locked them, and then I went over to the closet to look inside it. I saw some grappling hooks on the shelf. And several black coats on the rack and several black pairs of black tennis shoes on the floor of the closet. No trap door on the floor. Then I saw a marine blue suitcase on the floor of the closet. There wasn't anything else inside the closet. The suitcase made me curious. So I took it out of the closet and over to the table with the mirror and put the suitcase on the table, and then I unlocked the suitcase to look inside it. Then, I stopped suddenly, my gaze became fixed.

There was money inside the suitcase. Lots of it. But it looked like some of this money had been taken out of the suitcase. I thought about that. Maybe Sid had taken some of this money out of the suitcase and put it into his bank. That would explain the number of small deposits he had made into his bank. And maybe he had put the rest of the money in his cash box. That would explain the number of one hundred dollar bills inside his cash box. He would have to have some money on hand whenever he'd need it so he could make as less trips to this room as possible to get more money whenever he'd need it. The less he'd go into this room to get more money, the better.

And then there was something else: if the money that Sid had taken out of this briefcase had to do with what was going on out at that place outside town, then that would mean that the rest of the money that was here in the briefcase had to do with whatever it was that had gone on out at that place outside town.

And then there was something else: the clothes inside the dresser, and the items inside the table with the mirror, and the items inside the closet, and the photographic equipment, and the work room. All of these things had to mean one thing: all of these items were burglary equipment. Equipment that was used to commit burglaries. And maybe what had gone on out at that place outside town had to do with burglary as well as it had to do with this money. There was that possibility. All of these items *were* inside this hidden room with the money.

And there was something else: whatever it was that had gone on out at that place outside town must have happened shortly after those people had run Drumm out of town. Because they didn't want him to see or find out what they had done out at that place. It was bad enough that they had seen his looking at whatever it was they had done at that place at the time that Drumm had driven by the place. They didn't want to add to it by having him see or find out what they had done out at that place after they had run Drumm out of town.

I took my camera out of my pocket and photographed the money inside the suitcase, and then I closed and locked the suitcase and put it back where I had found it, and then I photographed everything inside the closet, and then I went back to the dresser and unlocked the drawers and photographed everything inside the drawers of the dresser, and then I closed and locked the drawers, and then I moved over to the table with the mirror and unlocked and opened all of the drawers of the table and photographed all of the contents in each and every one of the drawers, and then I closed and locked the drawers, and then I photographed all of the photographic equipment inside this room, and I photographed the red light, too, and then I unlocked and opened the door to the work room and turned on the light and photographed everything inside the work room, and then I turned off the light and closed and locked the door to the work room, and then I turned off the light inside this room and took my penlight out of my pocket and turned it on and shined the light in front of me and left this room the same way I had entered it, and then I turned my penlight off and put it back into my pocket, and then I photographed the dummy wall, partly closed, revealing some of the hall that lead into the hidden room, and some of the hall. Then I pushed the wall back into place, and then I put my camera back into my pocket and left the den and searched the rest of the house. I had to. I hadn't finished searching the rest of the house.

There wasn't anything else inside the house that could tell me why those people had run Drumm out of town. Then I snuck out of the house and into the garage and looked around here.

There wasn't anything here inside the garage that could tell me why those people had run Drumm out of town. Then I snuck out of the garage and out of the wooded area and back into my car and got into it and drove away. I had finished searching and bugging Sid's house and had finished tapping Sid's phone. Now I was driving over to Hal's place and Valerie's place and the other people's places to search them. It was time now for me to search their places.

I searched and bugged Hal's place and Valerie's place and the other people's places, and tapped their phones, and I found inside their places the same things I had found inside Sid's place and photographed them: hidden rooms with burglary and photographic equipment and work rooms and money inside the rooms. Which meant that Hal and Valerie and the other people were burglars as well as Sid was a burglar. And all of them *and* Sid must have been out that at that place outside town, and had done whatever it was that they had done out at that place. And whatever it was that they had done out at that place had to do with money and burglary.

And I saw Hal's and Valerie's and the other people's bank books, too. And they said that Hal and Valerie and the other people had made several small deposits into their banks about three weeks ago, the same time that Sid had made *his* several small deposits into *his* bank, and the same time that all of these people had run Drumm out of town. And there was some cash inside their cash boxes, too. And when I had looked inside the suitcases *their* money was in, I had noticed that some of this money had taken out of the suitcases. No doubt they had taken some of this money out of their suitcases and had put some of this money into their banks, and had put the rest of it into their cash boxes.

And if all of these people had taken some of this money out of their briefcases and had put into their banks, and had put the rest of it into their cash boxes, then that would mean that they were going to have to save and spend the money carefully. So no one would know they had it. And that made sense. No sense flashing the money around. That would attraction attention, the kind of attention that they couldn't have.

But if this money and burglary had to do with whatever it was that had gone on out at that place outside town, then why hadn't Drumm seen it when he had driven by the place and seen whatever it was these people had done at that place at that time, although Drumm hadn't seen whatever it was they had taken into the house from their cars? He had only seen them take things into the house from their cars . . . Unless perhaps the money had been inside the house before Drumm had driven by the place and had seen what he had seen. Or maybe these people, or, someone else had brought the money to the place after Drumm had driven by the place and had seen what he had seen, or, maybe these people, or, someone else, had brought the money to the place after those people had run Drumm out of town. That had to be it. It had to be one of the three.

But there was still the matter of finding out what had happened at that place outside town. The job of finding out what had happened at that place outside town still had to be done.

I was getting hungry, so I looked around for a place to eat at.

I found it. And went into it and sat down at a booth and ordered coffee and looked at a menu.

I was eating the meal I had ordered now: a nice hot roast beef sandwich, and I washed it down with more coffee. For dessert I had apple pie a la mode.

I felt better after I had eaten. Now I was having more coffee. I looked at my watch. Twelve forty-seven.

I had time to call Davis and tell him I had searched those people's places. I did.

"Good," Davis said after I had finished. "Maybe you can meet me at my office and tell me what you found. And I can tell you about the results of the rumor of our looking into the trespassing crime."

Then Davis and I agreed on when we could meet at his office. After that, we hung up. Then I put my cell phone back into my pocket and looked at my watch again. Twelve fifty-six.

My appointment with Davis was at nine o'clock tomorrow morning. Davis wanted us to meet at his office tomorrow morning at nine o'clock instead of some time today because our meeting could get lengthy. It was getting late in the afternoon today. That I understood. And between now and nine o'clock tomorrow morning, I had more than enough time to rest up and recuperate. I was going to need to do that. There wasn't anything else in the case I could do until I keep my appointment with Davis. So I took my time finishing my coffee, and after I finished my coffee, I put a nice tip on the table, and then I paid the check and left the restaurant, and then I drove over to Tacoma. I had decided to rest up and recuperate there. Not only that, I wanted to make sure that I'd be able to keep my appointment with Davis.

CHAPTER VIII

The next day, Davis and I were here at Davis's office, and I told Davis everything I had discovered inside those people's places.

"So they're burglars and they have lots of money, huh?" Davis said after I had finished.

"That's right," I confirmed. "And I'd like to know where that money came from."

"So would I. I'll have our burglary division look into it."

"Yeah, but don't have them question the burglars about the money. If they do, the burglars will clam up and bring lawyers into it, and we won't find out what happened out at that place outside town as well as we need to know where that money came from. We still need to find out what happened out at that place outside town. It's obvious that those people ran Drumm out of town to keep him from finding out what they did out at that place, and because what they did at that place when Drumm drove by it made Drumm curious."

"I know,"

"So instead, have your burglary division find out about any burglaries that have to do with large sums of money, and have them find out about other kinds of burglaries. Maybe *those* burglaries have to do with large sums of money."

"All right. I'll have them do that." Then Davis got on the phone and called Burglary and told them what Davis and I wanted, and what we were looking into, and what we had discovered so far. Then they hung up. Then Davis spoke to me: "They're on it."

"Great."

"We heard back about the rumor we spread about the investigation of the trespassing crime. We even recorded it. We were able to hear and record a conversation that Sid Wellman and Hal Cooper had at a restaurant. The both of them were having lunch there." Then Davis turned on the tape recorder, and then he and I listened.

"I heard that the police are trying to find out what happened out at that place that Stephanie Graham wants to rent," Hal told Sid. "Someone drove by the place and saw something peculiar, and then later, when he drove down the same street for some reason, he didn't see the same people there who did this something peculiar there, and he didn't see anyone else there, but he did see the FOR RENT sign there. That first time he drove by the place and saw what those people were doing, he didn't see the FOR RENT sign. He found this peculiarity and reported it to the police."

"Someone drove by the place and saw something peculiar, and then later, when he drove by the place for some reason, he didn't see the same people there, and he didn't see anyone else there, but he did see the FOR RENT sign there, and then he reported it to the police?"

"That's right,"

"Well, maybe that person drove by the place and saw the peculiarity before or after Drumm drove by the place and saw the same peculiarity. There is that possibility. Now what did the police find out about that peculiarity?"

"The police found nothing at that place. But because of the peculiarity of the FOR RENT sign, the police have reason to believe that a crime had been committed at that place and they're looking into it."

"So? Let them look into it. They won't find out what we did out there. We made sure of that. We erased all evidence of what we did out there. There's nothing there that connect us to what we did. So all we have to do keep our heads until the heat dies down and be ourselves and mind our own business, and keep an eye on Hurley while he's here in Ville, and keep an eye on Drumm when he gets here to Ville."

"Well, what if Hurley looks into what we did even though the police would stop looking into it and close the case because they couldn't find any evidence of what we did?"

"Yeah, there is that possibility. But let's hope he doesn't. But if he does, we'll get rid of him. We can do that."

"Of course,"

"We'll be out of the woods--if Hurley doesn't look into what we did."

"Yeah. All right. I'll do what you say, Sid."

"Good."

Then Davis turned the tape recorder off. That was the end of the recording.

"So I could be a loose end to them," I said. "I think they gave us something to work with. When I got back to the Lodge, and if Hal is there, I could tell him that I heard that the police are looking into the trespassing crime, and the crime me curious, and I'm going to look into the crime. And then Hal tells the other people, and then all of them try to get rid of me so I can't look into the trespassing crime. Even though there's nothing to connect them to the crime, and sooner or later, the police will have to stop investigating the crime and close the case because the investigation is coming to a dead end, they will have to get rid of a private detective looking into the crime, knowing that the private detective would keep on looking into the crime. That he would have the right to do."

Davis smiled. "Of course. And then we see what happens after you pull off this plan of yours."

"Of course."

"I will have to have you put twenty four hour surveillance, though. To protect you, and to see what goes on around you."

"Of course. Go for it."

Davis smiled.

So did I. "Well," I then said. "I'd better tell Craig and Drumm what we found out, and what we're going to do."

"I'll tell Craig. He's my friend, too, you know. You tell Drumm."

"I'll do that." Then I got on my cell phone and called Drumm and told him what Davis and I had found out and what we were going to do.

And Davis got on *his* phone and called Craig and told him the same thing.

Then we hung up. Then Davis spoke to me: "Craig sends his regards."

"Well, that was nice of him."

"He also told me the results of your wanting to put Drumm and his secretary under twenty four hour protective and investigative surveillance."

"And?"

"No one is following Drumm or his secretary or doing anything else to them."

"Which means that no one left Ville and went up to Bellingham and did something to them."

"That's right,"

"Because if they did, that would arouse suspicion. It might even expose them. They might even be arrested. They're playing it safe by keeping their heads and keeping to themselves and minding their own business. Because, as Sid Wellman said, 'We're almost out of the woods.'"

Davis nodded. "Yeah," he said.

"Yeah," *I* said.

A man from the photographic division of the police department came into Davis's office and gave Davis and me two copies of the photographs of the items I had discovered inside those people's places and photographed, and then he left. When I had gotten here to Davis's office to keep my appointment with Davis, I had told Davis that I had photographed what I had discovered inside those people's places as well as I had searched their places and had asked Davis to have the photographic division develop the film in my camera, and then Davis had called the photographic division and had told them what I had wanted and what Davis and I were working on, and what we discovered in the case so far. Now Davis was looking at *his* set of the photographs, and *I* was looking at *my* set of the photographs.

After we looked at the photographs, I asked Davis if I could have a manila envelope so I could put *my* set of the photographs into, and he took a manila envelope out of one of the drawers of his desk and gave it me, and then I put *my* set of the photographs into the envelope.

"Anything else, Captain?" I asked Davis.

"No," Davis answered. "I think that's it."

"All right. Then I'll go back to the Lodge and pull my number on Hal Copper."

"All right. And I'll stay here and get some work done while I wait to here back from Burglary."

"All right. See you later, Captain,"

"See you later, Mr. Hurley,"

Then I collected *my* set of the photographs and left.

I drove back to my hotel and checked my room to make sure I had everything before I check out, and then I went downstairs and paid my bill, and then I got back into my car, and then I took out of my pocket the radio to the bug inside the Office of the Lodge and my wireless earphone. Then I put into the radio one part of the wireless earphone, and then I put the earpiece of the wireless earphone into my ear. Then I turned the radio on and put it back into my pocket. Then I started up my car and left the hotel so I could go back to the Lodge and pull my number on Hal.

When I got back to the Lodge, I went into the Office so I could pull my number on Hal.

Hal was here at the front desk. Standing behind it and checking some papers. He looked up at me when he heard me come in and spoke to me: "Hello, Mr. Hurley. How are you?"

"Intrigued," I said.

"Oh?"

"Yeah. I heard about this trespassing crime that the police are looking into. I find it interesting. A man drove by this place that was for rent and it was outside town and noticed some activity out there. Although he couldn't see what it was these people were doing. All he *did* see were these people taking some things into this place from their cars. But he didn't see what it was they were taking into this house from their cars. And there was no FOR RENT sign there at that time. Then the same person drove by that place again at another time for some reason, but at that time, he didn't see anyone out there, but he did see the FOR RENT sign there. He found this peculiar and reported it to the police."

"I see,"

"And now *I'm* going to look into it. I find it interesting."

"Yes, I'll have to admit it *is* interesting." Hal smiled.

"Yes, it is. Did I get any mail while I was out?"

"I'll check," Then he went over to my box to look into it. No mail. And he told me so. Then I asked him for my key, and he gave it to me, and then I left the Office and went back to my motel room and turned on the TV and searched the room. It was clean. No bugs. No phone taps. Nothing else to indicate what had happened inside my room while I had been out. Then I set up the room for intruder alert the same way I had done it before, and then I got on the bed and took out of my pocket the radio to the bug inside the Office and my tape recorder and put them on the bed, and then I watched TV and listened to the radio to the bug inside the Office. Then, I heard something. Quickly I turned the tape recorder on.

A phone number was being dialed. Then I heard the phone ring.

"Hello?" it was Sid.

"Hello," Hal said. "Sid?"

"Yeah,"

"It's Hal."

"Hal. How are you doin'?"

"Hurley just came back. I don't know where he was, though. He didn't say where he was, and I didn't ask him. I couldn't ask him. You know why."

"Yeah. I know. The guests are entitled to their privacy."

"That's right," Then Hal told Sid about the conversation he had had with me about my looking into the trespassing crime.

"I see," Sid said after Hal had finished. "Well, gee, that's too bad. For Hurley for well as it is for us--if he finds something--and if we get rid of him. But we go ahead as planned: we keep an eye on him while he's here in Ville, and we keep an eye on Drumm after he gets here

to Ville, and mind our own business. If he finds nothing, we leave him alone. But if he finds something, we get rid of him."

CHAPTER IX

I turned the tape recorder off. Hal and Sid had finished talking and hung up. Then I rewound the tape on the recorder and took my cell phone out of my pocket and called Davis and told him I had pulled my number on Hal and what I heard Hal and Sid talk about on the phone and played the recording of the conversation.

"I see," Davis said after he and I had finished listening to the recording and after I had turned the tape recorder off.

"Yeah," *I* said. "We've got something."

"Yes, we do. And now I'll put you under twenty four hour surveillance, and you can call Craig and Drumm and tell them you pulled your number on Hal Cooper and what we're going to do now."

"Right,"

"And after you call Craig and tell him what you did and what we're going to do, tell him to call me. I'd like to know what the surveillance report on Drumm and his secretary is."

"I'll tell him. Anything else, Captain?"

"No, that's it. Bye, Mr. Hurley."

"Bye, Captain,"

Then Davis and I hung up, and then I rewound the tape on the recorder, and then I called Craig and told him I had pulled my number on Hal, and about what Davis and I had just talked about on the phone, and played the recording of what Sid and Hal had talked about on the phone that had to do with the number I had pulled on Hal.

"I see," Craig said after he and I had finished listening to the recording. "Now we've got something."

"Yes, we do," *I* said. "What's the latest surveillance report on Drumm and his secretary?"

"The same as before: no one is following him or doing anything else to them."

"Which means that the people from Ville haven't gone up to Bellingham and followed them or did anything else to them. They're still in Ville, playing it cool."

"That's what it looks like,"

"Yeah,"

"We're still putting Drumm and his secretary under protective and investigative surveillance."

"Good. Captain Davis wants you to call him and tell him the latest surveillance report on Drumm and his secretary."

"I'll do that. Anything else, Frank?"

"No, that's it. Bye, Craig,"

"Bye, Frank,"

Then Craig and I hung up, and then I rewound the tape on the recorder, and then I called Drumm and told him I had pulled my number on Hal, and about the phone conversation that Davis and I had had about the number I had pulled on Hal, and about the phone conversation I

had had with Craig about the number I had pulled on Hal and played the recording of the conversation that Sid and Hal had had that had to do with the number I had pulled on Hal.

"I see," Drumm said after he and I had finished listening to the recording and after I had finished rewinding the tape on the recorder.

"Yeah," I said. "We have something. And I have another idea that I might want to pull off that might help, but I shouldn't pull it off right after that number I pulled off on Hal Cooper. If I do, Hal and the rest of the people who ran you out of town might think that there's something wrong, and that could work against us."

"Well, what did you have in mind?"

"I don't know. It'll depend on what you tell me. I remember you said that when you drove by that place those people were taking the things into from their cars, you weren't there very long to see their faces and the cars they were taking the things out of and into the house."

"That's right."

"Well, what did you see of their faces and of those cars?"

"I saw a man. He got out of a yellow truck. He was tall, dark, slim, about one hundred and eighty pounds, and he had blond hair."

"That would be Sid Wellman."

Then Drumm described to me the rest of the people who had been at the house and had taken things into the house from their cars and said that those people had taken their things into the house from one car: a light orange station wagon.

Then I nodded. Then I spoke: "Yeah. Those people and Wellman are the ones who ran you out of town. And I might have something to work with. I'll work it out. If I come up with an idea, I'll you tell and Lieutenant Pritchard and Captain Davis what the idea is."

"All right."

"In the meantime, you continue doing what you're doing."

"All right. Anything else, Mr. Hurley?"

"No, that's it. Bye, Mr. Drumm."

"Bye, Mr. Hurley."

Then we hung up. Then I looked at my watch. Elven minutes to twelve.

I had time to come up with this new idea of mine. I went over to the refridgerator and pulled out of it a hamburger and a Coke from the food to go I had ordered, and then I went back to the bed and sat down on it and sat back against the headstand of the bed and continued watching TV and continued listening in on the Office and ate the hamburger and sipped the Coke while I thought about what this new idea could be and how to pull it off.

I came up with this idea and how to pull it off.

My cell phone was on one of the bedside tables. I had put it there after I had called Drumm and Craig and Davis and had talked to them. I turned to get the phone and call Drumm and Davis and Craig and tell them about this idea I had come up with and how to pull it off when the phone rang. I picked up the phone and said hello.

"Hello," it was Davis. "Frank Hurley?"

"Yes. This is Frank Hurley," I said.

"Captain Davis,"

"Captain. How are you?"

"Fine, fine. You?"

"Fine."

"Good. I need to have you meet me at my office tomorrow morning at ten o'clock. I don't want to talk to you about this today. It could get lengthy."

"What?"

"Burglary. I heard back from Burglary about some burglaries."

"Oh?"

"Yeah,"

"Well, that was quick."

"Yes, it was. I'll tell you about it tomorrow."

"All right. I'll be there."

"Good," Then Davis hung up.

So did I. Then I looked at my watch. Twelve nineteen.

I had time to call the hotel in Tacoma I had stayed at when I had stayed in Tacoma and had kept my last appointment with Davis and make a reservation. I would want to stay in Tacoma again so I'd be able to my new appointment with Davis. So I called the hotel and made my reservation. Then I hung up. After that I looked at my watch again. Twelve nineteen.

I had more than enough time to go back to Tacoma and check into the hotel and stay in Tacoma until I keep my new appointment with Davis. So I finished my hamburger and Coke, and then I threw the trash into the basket, and then I disassembled my intruder alert set up, and then I turned the TV off, and then I stepped out of my room and closed and locked the door, and then I went back to the Office and gave Hal my key, and then I went back to my car and got into it and started it up, and then I drove out of the driveway and away from the Lodge and over to Tacoma.

Along the way, I looked out the rear- and sideview mirrors of my car to see if I were being followed. Because Davis was having me be put under twenty four hour surveillance. And because of this, I was going to help out on the surveillance. I was going to need to as well as Davis wanted me put under twenty four hour surveillance.

I didn't see anyone following me. Which meant that someone *was* following me, but he was doing a good job at not being seen, or no one was following me.

But right now, if I *were* being followed, I didn't want whoever it was that was following me to know that I was going to go see Davis. So to play it safe, I took indirect routes to Tacoma and continued looking out the rear- and sideview mirrors to see if I were being followed. I didn't want the people who had run Drumm out of town to know where I was going to be and why.

When I got to Tacoma, I noticed that no one had been following me.

When I got to the hotel in Tacoma that I was going to stay at again, I registered, and then I was showed up to my room, and then I gave the bellboy a nice tip, and then he left, and then I turned the TV on and searched the room. Even though I found searching the room unnecessary. I don't think that the people who had run Drumm out of town knew where I was now and what I was going to do, but, just in case.

The room was clean. No bugs. The phone wasn't tapped. And there was nothing else inside the room to indicate that the people who had run Drumm out of town had done something in this room before I had checked into the hotel. Then I went over to the window and peeked out of it. I didn't see the people who had run Drumm out of town. That was good. That meant that they must not know I'm here in Tacoma and they must not know what I'm going to do. Then I set up the room for intruder alert the same way I had set up my room at the Lodge for intruder alert. I didn't think that the people who had run Drumm out of town were going to know where I was now, and what I was going to do, but, just in case.

After I set up my room for intruder alert, I set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at tonight, and then I took my gun out of my shoulder holster and put it underneath the pillow, and then I got undressed, and then I turned off the TV and got into bed and went to sleep. I had the time to sleep now. So I took it. I didn't know when I was going to get the chance to sleep.

The alarm clock buzzed. I stirred, then came awake and turned the alarm clock off and looked at the time. The clock told me it was the time I had wanted to get up at. Then I got out of bed and went over to the room to see if the people who had run Drumm out of town were there. They weren't. Then I went into the bathroom and threw cold water into my face, and then I shaved and showered, and then I left the bathroom and got dressed and removed the intruder alert set up, and then I stepped out of my room and closed and locked the door, and then I left my room so I could go have dinner. I was getting hungry. So I might as well eat while I had the chance to eat. Because I didn't know when I was going to get the chance to eat again.

I was walking outside the hotel now. Looking for a good place to eat at. It was dark out now. The sky was big and black, and with a sprinkling of stars in the sky, and the moon was big and round and shining brightly like a diamond.

Casually I looked around to see if the people who had run Drumm out of town were here in Tacoma and following me. I didn't see them. Which meant that they still must not have known that I was here in Tacoma, and they still must not know what I'm going to do. I liked that.

I found a good place to eat at and went into it. It was a seafood restaurant. I sat down at a booth, and a beautiful brunette came along and gave me a menu and poured water into my glass, and then she left.

I was eating my meal now: baked halibut and garlic mashed potatoes. And washing this down with beer. And for dessert I had chocolate ice cream.

While I ate, I also looked around casually to see if the people who had run Drumm out of town were here in Tacoma now and following me. I didn't see them. Which meant that they still didn't know that I was here in Tacoma, and they still didn't know what I was going to do. I liked that.

After I ate, I left a nice tip on the table, and then I paid my check and left the restaurant and went back to the hotel. It was time now for me to stay inside my hotel room for the rest of the evening and get a good night's sleep, and then go over to the police department and keep my appointment with Davis.

On my way over to the hotel, I looked around casually again to see if the people who had run Drumm out of town had appeared and were following me right now. I didn't see them. Which meant that they must still not know that I was here in Tacoma, and they must still not know what I was going to do. I liked that.

And when I got back here to my hotel room, I turned the light on and searched the room.

The room was clean. No bugs. No phone taps. Nothing else inside the room that indicated that the people who had run Drumm out of town had done something inside my room while I had been out. Which meant that they must still didn't know that I was here in Tacoma, and they must still not know what I was going to do. I liked that. Then I set up the room for intruder alert the same way I had done it before and stayed in and watched TV for the rest of the night, and then I set the alarm clock for a time I had wanted to get up at tomorrow morning, and then I got undressed and put my gun underneath the pillow and turned off the light and got into bed and went to sleep.

The next day, I was here at police headquarters and here inside Davis's office. This morning, when I had gotten up and had gotten dressed and had gone somewhere and had had breakfast and had come here to police headquarters to keep my appointment, I had noticed that the people who had run Drumm out of town weren't here in Tacoma. I liked that. Now Davis was sitting behind his desk, and I was sitting in front of his desk.

"Yeah" Davis said. "I heard back from Burglary about some burglaries."

"And?" I asked.

"There were some burglaries. But no places having to do with money, like banks, finance companies, insurance companies, investment companies, were burglarized and robbed. Instead, some industries were burglarized, but nothing at those places were robbed after those burglars burglarized those places. And nothing else happened at those places after the burglars burglarized those places, either. Like putting something there, or tampering with something. And the burglars were seen escaping after they burglarized those places and did this something else inside those places, but they weren't caught. And they had to do something else inside those places after they burglarized them instead of steal something there or put something there or tamper with something inside those places.

"I agree. But if they did something else inside those places after they burglarized those places instead of steal something in those places or put something in those places or tampering with something in those places, then that would mean that they did something

inside those places that was just as important as steal something from those places, or put something in those places, or tamper with something in those places. My guess is that they were looking for something inside those places, or they photographed something inside those places, or both. Those theories would make sense."

"Yes, they would. But where does that money the people who ran Drumm out of town come in?"

I thought about. Then I spoke: "Unless perhaps they were paid to burglarize those industries and do what they did inside those places. That would have to be it. It makes sense. Someone must have paid them to burglarize those places and do what they did inside those places, someone who wanted them to burglarize those places and do what they did inside those places, someone who had a lot of money and was willing to pay those burglars a lot of money to burglarize those places and do what they did inside those places. And whatever it was those burglars did after they burglarized those places must have been awfully important to the person who paid them to burglarize those places and do what they did inside those places."

"Yeah," Davis said. "And after those burglars burglarized those places and did what they did inside those places, they must have met the person who paid them for burglarizing those and doing what they did at those places at the house those people took those things into from their cars, and then the person who had them burglarize those places and do what they did inside those places paid them for doing what he wanted them to do, and they gave this person whatever it was that had to do with what he wanted them to do. My guess is that what it was they gave him were photographs of something they photographed inside those places after they burglarized them. That would explain what it was that Drumm saw those people take into that place from their cars, but he couldn't see what it was they took inside that place from their cars."

"Yeah. But what could it be that those burglars may have photographed inside those places after they burglarized those places?"

"I don't know. But whatever it was, it was important to the person who wanted those burglars to burglarize those places and do what they did inside those places, something he was willing to pay those burglars a lot of money to do, something that was worth a lot of money to him."

"Yeah. Well, all we have to do now is find out who this person is that wanted the burglars to burglarize those places and possibly photographed whatever it was they photographed inside those places as well as find out what those burglars did inside those places after they burglarized them as well as find out what those people did out at the house outside town."

"Yeah."

"Here's the list of all of those industries those burglars burglarized and did what they did inside those places," Davis said and gave me the list.

I looked at the list.

"Some of those industries are in Tacoma," Davis continued. "and the rest of them are in the surrounding areas."

I whistled when I looked at the list. There were a lot of industries, and they were important industries. "Well, I think we've got something that help us find out who this person is that hired the burglars to burglarize those industries and do what they did inside those industries: the luggage all of that money was in that the person paid the burglars with for burglarizing those industries and doing what they did inside those places. They look brand new. And that makes sense. If he used used luggage to put the money in and give to the burglars, the luggage would be easier to trace. Eventually the police would find out who the luggage belongs to. Whereas new luggage would be harder to trace. If we can find out when the person bought this luggage, that might help. No doubt he bought this luggage before he had the burglars burglarize those industries and do what they did inside those industries. And I notice here on the list of the industries that were burglarized the dates of when these burglaries were committed. The dates of when these burglaries were committed may help." Then I gave the list back to Davis, and then Davis looked at the dates of when the burglaries had been committed that were on the list.

"Yeah," Davis said after he had finished reading the dates of when these burglaries had been committed. "I'll get Burglary to find out when this luggage was purchased before the burglaries occurred and tell them what we've talked about."

I nodded and told Davis what the suitcases looked like and what colors they were. Not all of them were blue like Sid's was. Some of them were blue, and the rest of them were different colors.

Davis wrote this information down on a pad on his desk, and then he got on the phone and called Burglary and told them to find out when this luggage was purchased, and told them what the suitcases looked like and what colors of them were, and then Davis told Burglary what he and I had just talked about. After that they hung up, and then Davis spoke to me again: "They'll look into it. It may take a while, since there a lot of stores in Tacoma and in the surrounding areas would sell this kind of luggage."

"I know. I understand. I've come up with another idea that I want to pull off that might help. But I shouldn't pull it off right after that number I pulled on Hal Cooper. If I do, Hal Cooper and the people who ran Drumm out of town will think that something's wrong, and that could work against us. And because of this, I'm going to pull off this new idea later."

"Well, what *is* this new idea?"

Then I told him.

Davis nodded after I had finished. "I see," he then said. "That should work."

"Yeah, it should," *I* said.

"But you'll be setting yourself up as a target," Davis then pointed out. "You know that."

"I know. But we've got to get the answers out into the open."

"Yeah. Well, I insist that I continue putting you under twenty four hour surveillance."

"Of course. This is *your* show as well as it's mine."

"Yes, it is. And I'll call Burglary and Craig and tell them what we're going to do, and you call Mr. Drumm and tell *him* what we're going to do."

"I'll do that. And I when you call Craig, I hope you ask him what the latest surveillance report is on Drumm and his secretary. I'll need to know that as well as you will."

"I know." Then Davis got on the phone and called Burglary and Craig and told them what we we're going to do, and I called Drumm and told *him* what Burglary and Davis and *I* were going to do.

After Davis finished talking to Burglary and Craig, they hung up. And after Drumm and *I* finished talking, *we* hung up. After that, Davis told me what the latest surveillance report on Drumm and his secretary was: it was the same as before: no different. Which meant that the people from Ville still hadn't left Ville and still hadn't gone up to Bellingham to follow or do something else to Drumm and his secretary. They were still playing it cool. Still staying in Ville and still playing it safe by acting like they had nothing to worry about, although they were still keeping their eye on me. Just in case.

"Craig also sends his regards," Davis said after he had finished.

"Well, that's nice," *I* said.

"Well, I think that's it."

"Yeah. I think so, too. See ya later, Captain."

"See ya later, Mr. Hurley,"

Then I left.

I was out here in the parking lot of the police department now. I looked around casually to see if the people who had run Drumm out of town were here in Tacoma and following me. They weren't. I liked that.

When I reached my car, I unlocked it and got into it, and then I started it up and drove out of the parking lot and over to the hotel so I could check out of it.

Along the way, I continued looking around casually to see if the people who had run Drumm out of town were here in Tacoma and following me. They weren't. I liked that.

When I reached the hotel, I pulled into the parking lot and parked my car, and then I got out of my car and locked it and went to the hotel so I could go up to my room and search it and see if I had everything before I check out and go back to Ville; I also looked around casually to see if the people who had run Drumm out of town were in the hotel and following me. They weren't. I liked that.

Here inside my room, I turned on the TV, and then I searched the room. But I didn't find any bugs or phone taps inside it, and I didn't find anything else inside the room that could tell me that the people who had run Drumm out of town had done something here inside my room while I had been out. Then I looked around the room to see if I got everything. I did. Then I turned the TV off and stepped out of the room and locked it, and then I went downstairs and turned in the key and paid my bill, and then I left the hotel, looking around casually again to see if the people who had run Drumm out of town were here in the hotel right now and following me. They weren't. I liked that.

Out here in the parking lot, I walked through the parking lot so I could go to my car and get into it and drive back to Lodge and looked around casually again to see if the people who had run Drumm out of town were here in Tacoma and following me now. They weren't. I liked that.

When I reached my car, I unlocked it and got into it, and then I started it up and drove out of the parking lot and turned into the street and drove down the street.

As I was leaving Tacoma I continued looking around casually again to see if the people who had run Drumm out of town were here in Tacoma and following me. They weren't. I liked that.

I left Tacoma and went back to Ville the same way I left Ville and had gone to Tacoma: by taking indirect routes. I needed to. I didn't want the people who had run Drumm out of town to know that I had seen Davis about what Davis and I had talked about as well as I hadn't wanted them to know that I had gone to see Davis about what he and I had talked about.

CHAPTER X

When I was reaching Ville, I stopped taking indirect routes to Ville. I wasn't going to need to take indirect routes to Ville from here on in. I had done what I had had to do that had required me to take indirect routes to from Ville to Tacoma and vice versa. Now it was time for me to take direct routes from here on in. I was going to need to. I was still going to have to find out if the people who had run Drumm out of town were following me so I could help Davis put under twenty four hour surveillance. So I continued looking out the rear- and side view mirrors of my car to see if the people who had run Drumm out of town were following me. I didn't see them. Even though I had been giving them the slip. But that didn't mean that I wouldn't see them following me again later.

When I reached Ville, I drove to the Lodge, and when I got to the Lodge, I turned into the driveway and parked my car in front of *my* motel room, and then I got out of my car and walked over to the Office. Along the way, I looked around casually again to see if the people who had run Drumm out of town were here and following me. I didn't see them. Which meant that they must not have known that I was back here in Ville.

When I reached the Office, I walked into it asked Hal for my key and asked him if I got any mail, and he took my key out of my box and gave it to me, and then I looked inside the box again to see if I had gotten any mail, and noticed there was no mail inside my box, and told me I didn't get any mail. And while Hal and I talked, Hal didn't look, sound, or act like he was hiding something. He didn't even ask me how it was going in my investigation. However, I wasn't surprised about the way he was behaving. Then I left the Office without pulling off my new idea because of when I wanted to pull off the idea.

As I walked back to my room, I looked around casually again to see if the people who had run Drumm out of town had showed up and were following me. I didn't see them. Which meant that they still must not have known that I was back here in Ville.

When I reached my room, I unlocked the door and went into the room and closed the door, and then I looked around the room. Nothing out of the ordinary here. Then I went over to the TV and turned it on, and then I searched my room.

The room was clean. No bugs. No phone taps. And nothing else here to indicate that the people who had run Drumm out of town had been inside my room and had done something inside my room while I had been out. Then I set up the room for intruder alert the same way I had done it before, and then I took my radio to the bug inside the Office and my tape recorder out of my pocket and put them on the bed, and then I withdrew from the refridgerator another hamburger and Coke from the food to go I had ordered, and then I sat down on the bed and continued watching TV and ate the hamburger and sipped the Coke and listened in on the Office. I was getting hungry. So I might as well eat while I had the chance to eat. I didn't know when I was going to get the chance to eat again. I also decided to stay in for the rest of the day so I could get some sleep. I had the chance to sleep. So I might as well sleep while I had the chance to sleep. I didn't know when I was going to get the chance to sleep again.

Then I heard something inside the Office. I listened and turned on the tape recorder. It was a phone number being dialed, and then a phone ringing.

"Hello?" it was Sid.

"Hello," Hal said. "Sid?"

"Yeah?"

"It's Hal. Hurley's back."

"He is?"

"Yeah. Well, that's interesting. We tried to find him and follow him after you told us he left the Lodge. But we couldn't find him. And now he's back."

"Yeah,"

"I wonder where he was and what he was doing?"

"Me, too."

"Well, I don't know where he was and what he was doing, but the important thing is that he's back. And now we can continue keeping an eye on him the way we have planned."

"Yeah,"

"Thanks for letting me know he's back, Hal,"

"No problem. Anything else, Sid?"

"No, that's it. Bye, Hal."

"Bye, Sid,"

Then Sid and Hal hung up. After that I turned the tape recorder off. Sid and Hal had finished talking, and there was nothing else happening inside the Office. Then I rewound the tape on the recorder, and then I took my cell phone out of my pocket and called Davis and told him about the new phone conversation I had just heard Sid and Hal have about me and played back the recording of that conversation.

"Yeah," Davis said after I had finished talking and after he and I had finished listening to the recording.

"Yeah," I said. Then I told Davis why I had taken indirect routes to and from his office.

"I understand. But they may try to find out why they tried to find and follow you, but they couldn't find and follow you as well as continue doing what they're doing now."

"I know. That's a risk we'll have to take. But I didn't want them to know about our last meeting."

"I understand. You did what you had to do. And we'll continue doing what we're doing now, too."

"Of course,"

"Anything else, Mr. Hurley,"

"No, that's it. Bye, Captain."

"Bye, Mr. Hurley,"

Then Davis and I hung up, and then I put my cell phone on one of the bedside tables, and then I continued watching TV and listening in on the Office and eating my hamburger and sipping my Coke.

I felt better after I had eaten. Then I set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at later, and then I took my gun out of my shoulder holster and put it underneath the pillow, and then I got undressed and got into my pajamas, and then I turned the TV off and got into bed and went to sleep.

The alarm clock buzzed. I stirred, then came awake and turned the alarm clock off and looked at the time. It was the time I had wanted to get up at. Then I got out of bed and got out of my pajamas and went into the bathroom and threw cold water in my face, and then I shaved and showered, and then I went back into my room and got dressed, and then I disassembled the intruder alert set up, and then I stepped out of my room and closed and locked the door, and then I walked over to Meal Time to have dinner. I was in the mood to eat out this time. Not only that, I wanted to see what Valerie was doing. I hadn't seen her in a while.

Along the way, I looked around casually again to see if the people who had run Drumm out of town were here right now and following me right now. I didn't see them. Which meant that they *were* here right now and following me, but they were staying out of sight while they were following me so I could see them follow me, or they weren't here at all.

When I reached Meal Time, I stepped inside the restaurant and looked around. It was busy. Valerie was busy, too. She was waiting on people. I looked for a table and found one, and then I went over to it and sat down at it.

Valerie came over and gave me a menu and said hello to me. "I haven't seen *you* in a while." she then said to me, smiling.

"Well, I've been busy," I told her. I smiled, too. Then I told her I'd like to have some coffee, and then she disappeared to go get the coffee and bring it back to me.

I thought about the new experience I had just had with Valerie: it was the same as before. No different; I also looked around the room casually. No one showed any interest in me. Which meant that if the people who had run Drumm out of town were here inside Meal Time and following me, then they must be watching me right now, but making sure that I didn't see them watching me. Or they weren't here inside Meal Time at all.

Valerie came back with the coffee and took my order, and she acted the same way she had acted before: no different. Then she left and I sipped my coffee and looked around the room casually again. And everything was the same as before. No different.

A few minutes later, Valerie came back with my chicken fried steak and fries and beer, and then I dug right into the steak and sipped the beer and noticed the way Valerie was behaving: it was the same as before. No different. Then she left.

And she behaved the same way she had done before when she came back for the dirty dishes after I had finished dinner and ordered dessert. No different. Then she left.

I was having chocolate ice cream for dessert now, and washing it down with more beer.

I felt better after I had eaten. Then I left a nice tip on the table, and then I paid my check and left.

Outside Meal Time, I looked around casually again as I walked back to my motel room to see if the people who had run Drumm out of town were here and following me right now. I

didn't see them. Which meant that they were here and following me right now, but they were staying out of sight while they were doing it so I wouldn't see them following me, or they weren't here at all.

When I reached my motel room, I unlocked it and went into it and closed the door, and then I turned on the light and looked around the room. Nothing out of the ordinary. Then I went over to the TV and turned it on, and then I searched my room.

It was clean. No bugs. No phone taps. Nothing else inside the room that indicated that the people who had run Drumm out of town had been here and had done something the room while I had been out. Then I set up the room for intruder alert the same way I had done it before, and then I turned the light off and went over to the refrigerator and withdrew a Coke from the refrigerator, and then I went over to the bed and sat down on it and sipped the Coke and watched TV. It was still early in the evening, and there was nothing else in the investigation I could do until tomorrow, so I decided to watch TV for a while, then go to bed and get some sleep for tomorrow's work.

It was time for me to go to bed. So I set the alarm clock for a time I wanted to get up at tomorrow, and then I got undressed and got into my pajamas, and then I put my gun underneath the pillow, and then I turned the TV off and got into bed and went to sleep.

I was up early the next morning and pulling out of the driveway of the Lodge. I had gotten up at the time I had wanted to get up at and had gotten dressed and had left my key at the Office and had had breakfast. Now I was driving through Ville so I could leave and go do what I had to do today. This morning while I had gone into the Office and had given my key to Hal, Hal had acted the same way before, and when I had had breakfast at Meal Time, Valerie had acted the same way she had acted before.

My cell phone rang. I took it out of my pocket and said hello.

It was Davis. "You're being followed," he then told me.

"Oh, really?" I said.

"Yeah. Charlie Swain is following you."

"He's one of the people who ran Drumm out of town,"

"That's right. He's driving his light green Ranchero."

I looked into the rear- and sideview mirrors of my car. "I don't see him," I then told Davis.

"That's because he's staying far behind you. He doesn't want you to see him following you."

"Of course."

I was out here at the place the people who had run Drumm out of town had been at when they had done what they had done at the place. I was pretending to investigate the scene of the crime. Davis had called me and had told me that Swain had driven past me when he had seen me come here to the place that the people who had run Drumm out of town had done what they had done here at the place. Then he drove further down the road and pulled off of it and parked his car on the shoulder and watched the place the people who had run Drumm out of

town had done what they had done at. And he was still watching the place. Through his binoculars.

When I finished my faking my examination of the crime scene, I went into the house and got out my cell phone and called Davis so I could tell him I had finished my faking my examination of the crime scene and that I was going to go back to Ville and pull off that new idea of mine. I thought it was time to do it. It seemed like it. And the reason why I had gone into the house to talk to Davis on the phone was because I didn't want Swain to see me talking on the phone.

I was driving back to Ville now. I had had my phone conversation with Davis, and when I had left the place the people had run Drumm out of town had done what they had done at, Davis had told me that Swain was still following me. I had looked out the rear- and sideview mirrors of my car to see if Swain were following me, but I couldn't see him. Which meant that he was staying out of sight while I was following me so I wouldn't see him following me. Now I reached Ville and drove over to the Lodge and into the driveway and parked my car in front of *my* motel room, and then I got out of my car and locked it, and then I went into the Office so I could pull off my new number.

Hal was here. He came out here to the front desk when he heard the door open and saw me come in. He smiled at me when he saw me. "Mr. Hurley," he said. "How are you?"

"Pretty good," I said cheerfully. "You?"

"Fine,"

"Good. I found out something interesting about that trespassing crime. You know, the crime that happened out at that place outside town? Well? I found out that someone drove by that place and saw some people go take some things out of their cars and take them into the house. He couldn't see what it was these people took into the house from their cars, although he found it curious whatever it was they were taking into the house from their cars, but he did see the faces of the people who took those things into the house from their cars. And there was no FOR RENT sign at that place when those people took those things into the house from their cars. But when the same person drove by the place again, the one who saw the people take those things into the place from their cars, and going in the opposite direction, and going in that direction at another time, he saw something peculiar at that place: those people who took their things into the house from their cars weren't there, but the FOR RENT sign was. The person who drove by the place found this peculiar and reported it to the police. And then the police looked into it. They didn't find anything at that place outside town, but they're still looking into the crime." Then I described to Hal Sid and the rest of the people who had run Drumm out of town. "All I have to do now is find out who those people were who did what they did out at that place, and found out what they did at that place."

"Well, I hope you, do," Hal said.

"I hope so, too. Did I get any mail while I was out?"

Hal checked my box. Then he spoke to me: "No. No mail."

Then I asked Hal for my key, and then he took it out of my box and gave it to me, and then I thanked him and left the Office so I could go back to my room.

Along the way, I looked around casually again to see if the people who run Drumm out of town were here and following me right now. I didn't see them. Which meant that they must be keeping out of sight while they were following me. So I wouldn't see them follow me. Davis had told me that Swain *was* following me.

When I reached my motel room, I unlocked it and went into it and closed the door, and then I went over to the TV and turned it on, and then I took the radio to the bug inside the Office and the earphone and my tape recorder out of my pocket and put them on the bed, and then I got on the bed and put the earphone in my ear and listened. I didn't have time to search my room and set it up for intruder alert right now. Hal could be making his call to Sid or any of the other people who had run Drumm out of town right now for all I knew. And because of that, I wanted to be ready to hear it. Then, I heard something. I listened and turned the tape recorder on.

A phone number was being dialed. Then another phone rang.

"Hello," it was Sid.

"Hello," Hal said. "Sid?"

"Yeah?"

"It's Hal,"

"Hal. How are you?"

Then Hal told Sid about the conversation he had had with me about what I had discovered in the trespassing crime and what I was going to do.

"Well, we can't have that," Sid said after Hal had finished. "If he finds out who we are and what we did out at that place, we've had it. And because of this, we're going to have to get rid of him."

CHAPTER XI

"First we'll kidnap him so no one will see us get rid of him," Sid continued.

"Of course," Hal said.

"You continue doing what you're doing now."

"All right. Anything else, Sid?"

"No, that's it. Thanks for bringing to my attention what Hurley found out and what he's going to do."

"No problem. Bye, Sid."

"Bye, Hal,"

Then Sid and Hal hung up. Then *I* turned the tape recorder off, and then I searched the room.

It was clean. No bugs. No phone taps. Nothing else to indicate the people who had run Drumm out of town had been inside my room and had done something inside my room while I had been out. Then I set up the room for intruder alert the same way I had done it before. Then I went back to the bed and sat down on it, and then I rewound the tape on the recorder, and then I took my cell phone out of my pocket and called Davis and told him about the phone conversation that I had heard Sid and Hal have and played the recording of that conversation.

"Well," Davis said after I had finished telling him about the conversation and after he and I had finished hearing the recording of the conversation. "It looks like your idea worked."

"Yeah," I said. "So all we have to do now is wait for them to make *their* move."

"Yeah. And maybe we'll have the answers we need."

"We'll find out,"

"I'll tell Craig your idea worked and what we're going to do and get from him the latest surveillance report on Drumm and his secretary, and you call Drumm and tell him your idea worked and what we're going to do, and after you and Drumm have talked, and after Craig and I have talked, I'll tell you what the latest surveillance report on Drumm and his secretary is."

"Right,"

"Anything else, Mr. Hurley?"

"No. I think that's it. Bye, Captain,"

"Bye, Mr. Hurley,"

Then Davis and I hung up, and then Davis made his phone call to Craig, and *I* made *my* phone call to Drumm. After that Craig and Davis hung up, and Drumm and *I* hung up, and then Davis called me back and told me what the latest surveillance report on Drumm and his secretary was: it was the same as before. Which meant that the people who had run Drumm out of town still hadn't left Ville and still hadn't gone up to Bellingham to do something to Drumm and his secretary or to follow them. Then I took my gun out of my shoulder holster to

check it. It was loaded. All six times. Then I put my gun back into my shoulder holster and looked at my watch. Elven fifty-six.

There wasn't anything else I could do until the people who had run Drumm out of town make their move. Although I didn't know where or when they were going to make their move. I only knew that they were going to kidnap me before they get rid of me so no one will see their getting rid of me. I was getting hungry so I put my cell phone on one of the bedside tables and walked over to the refridgerator to pull out of it a cheeseburger and another Coke from the food to go order I had made.

My cell phone rang. Quickly I withdrew a cheeseburger and a Coke from the refridgerator and walked back to the bed and put the cheeseburger and Coke on the same bedside table I had put my cell phone on, and then I picked up the cell phone and said hello.

It was Davis. "I just found out from Burglary who bought that luggage and when," he then told me.

"Oh?" I wondered.

"Yeah. The person who bought that luggage was Eric Winslow. He's an industrialist and a millionaire, and he lives in Tacoma." Then Davis told me when Winslow had bought all of this luggage: it was a few days before those burglars burglarized those places and did what they did inside them. Then Davis told me the date when Winslow had purchased all of this luggage. "And get a load of this," Davis continued. "He bought all of this luggage from different stores on the Internet. But he bought one piece of luggage from one store, and he bought another piece of luggage from another store, and so on and so on."

"I see. Well, that makes sense. He wouldn't want to buy all of that luggage from one place. If he would, that would make someone wonder; and that someone might even look into it. Although he bought all of that luggage on the same day."

"Yeah. And here's something else: on his own time, Winslow creates things. His hobby is creating things. He's even sold some of his creations. He's an inventor as well as he's a millionaire and an industrialist."

"I see. Well, that's interesting."

"Yes, it is,"

"And he must be the one who hired the burglars to burglarize those places and do what they did inside them."

"Yeah,"

"But if he did hire them to burglarize those places and do what they did inside them, then why did he hire them to burglarize those places and do what they did inside them?"

"I don't know. But maybe we'll find out."

"Yeah. Maybe we will."

"You can call Drumm and tell him what we found out about Winslow, and I'll call Craig and tell *him* what we found out about Winslow, and I'll get from Craig the latest surveillance report on Drumm, and then I'll call *you* and tell *you* what the latest surveillance report on Drumm and his secretary is."

"All right. Anything else, Captain?"

"No, that's it. Bye, Mr. Hurley,"

"Bye, Captain,"

Then Davis and I hung up, and then Davis called Craig and told him what we had found out about Winslow, and then Davis asked Craig what the latest surveillance report on Drumm, and then Craig told him, and *I* called Drumm and told *him* what Davis and I had found out about Winslow. After that, Craig and Davis hung up, and Drumm and *I* hung up, and then Davis called me back and told me what the latest surveillance report on Drumm and his secretary was: it was the same as before. No different. Which meant that the people who had run Drumm out of town had left Ville and hadn't gone up to Bellingham to do something to Drumm and his secretary, or to follow them. Then Davis and I hung up. Then I looked at my watch. Twelve fourteen.

I had time to have lunch. So I ate my cheeseburger and sipped my Coke and watched TV and continued listening in on the Office.

I felt better after I had eaten. Now I was taking a nap. I had the time to do it. I didn't know when the people who had run Drumm out of town were going to kidnap me. It could be anytime. And because of that, I thought I'd take the time to take a nap. But my guess was that they were planning my kidnapping right now while one of them was watching me and following me.

The alarm clock buzzed. I stirred, then came awake and turned the alarm clock off. Then I looked at the alarm clock. It told me it was the time I had wanted to wake up at. Then I got out of bed and got out of my pajamas and went into the bathroom and threw cold water into my face, and then I shaved and showered, and then I went back into the room and got dressed. Then I disassembled the intruder alert set up and stepped out of the room and closed and locked the door, and then I left my room so I could go over to Meal Time again and have dinner there. I was in the mood to eat out for dinner again. Not only that, I knew that there wouldn't be any harm in going out before the people who had run Drumm out of town kidnap me. They were going to have to keep me in their sights until they *do* kidnap me. And another reason why I was going to eat out for dinner again, *and* have dinner at Meal Time again, was to see Valerie again. I wanted to see what she was doing *this* time.

It was dark out now. The sky was black, with a hint of stars in it, and the quarter moon shined like gold.

As I walked over to Meal Time, I looked around casually again to see if the people who had run Drumm out of town were here and following me. I didn't see them. Which meant that they *were* here and following me, but they were staying out of sight while they were doing it so I wouldn't see them follow me, or they weren't here at all.

Valerie was doing the same thing she had done before while she was waiting on me. For dinner I had chicken fried steak again, and washed it down with beer again, and for dessert I had chocolate ice cream again, and washed that down with beer again, and while I ate, I looked around the restaurant casually again to see if the people who had run Drumm out of

town were here inside the restaurant watching me. I didn't see them. Which meant that they *were* here inside the restaurant and watching, but they didn't look like they were watching me so I wouldn't noticed their watching me, or they weren't here inside the restaurant at all.

I felt better after I had eaten. Then I left a nice tip on the table, and then I paid my check and left the restaurant so I could go back to my motel room.

Along the way, I looked around casually again to see if the people who had run Drumm out of town were here and following me now. I didn't see them. Which meant that they *were* here and following me now, but they were staying out of sight while they were doing it so I wouldn't see their doing it, or they weren't here at all.

I reached my motel room, and then I unlocked the door and went in and closed the door and turned on the light.

Charlie Swain was sitting on the bed, and Mike Cruthers and Raffie Gorman, two more people who had run Drumm out of town, were sitting around the table. Then all three men stood up when they saw me.

Swain was tall, thin, almost emaciated, had the face of a worm, and he was wearing a light green windbreaker and a black shirt and light brown pants and black tennis shoes.

Cruthers was three inches smaller than Swain, had black hair, brown eyes, the face of a vampire, a thick build, and he was a gray waistlength coat and a white shirt and black jeans and black tennis shoes.

Gorman was just as tall as Swain, and he had potato face, a big nose, a solid build, and he was wearing a black waistlength coat and a light yellow shirt and brown pants and black leather shoes.

And all three men were wearing black gloves, and they had guns in their hands, and there were silencers on the guns, and the guns were pointed at me.

CHAPTER XII

"Throw your gun and your car keys on the bed, Mr. Hurley," Swain said to me.

I did what he told me to do. Then Cruthers went over to the bed and picked up the gun and the keys and put them in his pocket, and Gorman walked over to me and frisked me. Then he spoke to Swain and Cruthers: "He's clean."

"All right," Swain continued. "Let's go. You're coming with us, Mr. Hurley."

"Oh?"

"Yeah,"

"Where are we going?"

"You'll find out,"

Then all four of us left my room, and I locked the room, and then Cruthers unlocked my car and got behind the wheel, and then Swain told me to get into the front seat of the car, and I did, and then Swain and Gorman got into the back seat of the car. After that, Cruthers started up my car, and then he and Swain and Gorman and I pulled away from my motel room and drove out of the driveway and turned onto the street and drove down the street.

When we got a few feet away from the Lodge, we stopped at Swain's car, which he had parked across the street from the Lodge, and then Swain got out of *my* car and got into *his* car, and then Gorman and Cruthers and I drove away from Swain's car, and then I looked behind me and out the rear view window. Then I saw Swain driving behind us.

"Yeah," Cruthers said to me. "He's following us."

Then I turned around and looked forward and out the front window of my car.

"And don't *you* try anything, Mr. Hurley," Cruthers continued. "As you know, my other associate is in the back seat of your car and has his gun on you. So sit back and relax."

I didn't. But I didn't look like it. I couldn't sit back and relax. I had to be on my guard; I had to be vigilant.

We came to Sid's place, and then we pulled into the driveway of his place, and then Cruthers drove my car all the way up to Sid's garage, and then Gorman got out of the car and pulled up the door of the garage, and then Cruthers drove my car into the garage, and then he told me to get out of the car, and I did what he told me to do, and then he told me to get out of the garage, and I did, and then Gorman went into the garage and closed the door. Swain parked *his* car in the driveway and next to the garage, and then he got out of *his* car and closed the door, and then he took *his* gun out of his shoulder holster and held it on me and told me to go into the house. Then he and I went into the house by way of the side door, and then Swain told me to go into the living room. I did.

Sid got out of his black recliner chair and stood up when he saw me.

He looked exactly like what I had seen in his photograph, and from the description of him that Drumm had told me; his eyes were gray, and his features were rugged, and he was wearing a shoulder holster, and his gun was inside the shoulder holster, and he was also wearing a long sleeve light blue shirt and blue jeans and black tennis shoes.

"Good evening, Mr. Hurley," he said to me. "My name is Wellman. Sid Wellman. The guy holding his gun on you is Charlie Swain."

I looked back at Swain.

"Mr. Hurley?" he said.

"Mr. Swain?" I said.

"Sit down," Sid then said to me.

I went over to the couch next to his recliner chair and sat down in it, and so did Swain, and Swain continued holding his gun on me, and Sid sat back down in his recliner chair.

"I'm sorry I won't be able to offer you something to eat or drink while you're here," Sid then said to me. "but I'm afraid you won't be here very long. You'll be here just long enough for me to tell you why I had you brought here. And you're probably wondering why I had you brought here."

"Yes, I am," I said.

"Well, it has to do with something that you started look into, something you heard about from the police; we heard about it, too: a trespassing crime. It happened over at this house outside town, a house that's for rent. Someone was driving by the place and saw some people take some things into the house from their cars. Although he didn't see what it was these people were taking into the house from their cars. He only saw them taking things into the house from their cars. Although he did see the faces of the people who took the things into the house from their cars. But he didn't see a FOR RENT sign there. Then, later on, when the same person drove by the place, going in the opposite direction, he didn't see those people there, the ones who took those things into the house from their cars; he didn't even see any one else at the house. But he did see the FOR RENT sign at that place. He found this peculiar. And so he reported it to the police, and the police looked into it, but they didn't find anything at the house, but they're still looking into the trespassing crime."

"Yeah. But what I don't understand is why didn't the police catch or question the people who took those things into the house from their cars? You did say that the person who noticed the peculiarity did see the faces of the people who took those things into the house from their cars."

"Yes, I did. But I don't understand it, either. Unless perhaps the person who noticed the peculiarity didn't tell the police what these people look like. Maybe he forgot to tell the police what these people look like, or maybe it wasn't *that* important for him to the police what these people look like."

"Yeah. It would be one or the other."

"Yeah. But the people who took those things into the house from their cars realized that the police would look into such a peculiarity, but they wouldn't find anything. They made sure of that. They made sure that nothing would connect them to what they did out at that place. And then, after a while, the police would close the case, realizing they hadn't found out what happened. But then there was you. You got interested in the case. This bothered the people

who took those things into the house from their cars. You would have found out what they did inside that house."

"And what did these people do inside that house?"

"They sold some photographs for money, photographs of blueprints."

"Blueprints?"

"Yes. Blueprints. Blueprints of things that someone wanted, but he couldn't get these things himself. And so he improvised by having a group of burglars burglarize the places the blueprints were at and photograph the blueprints and bring the blueprints to him, and in return, he gave these burglars a lot of money. And then the person who wanted to improvise on getting what he wanted could create what he wanted from the blueprints."

"I see. And who is this someone who wanted to improvise on getting these things for himself by having the burglars burglarize those places and photograph the blueprints for and then have them give him the photographs of the blueprints and he creates what he wants from those blueprints?"

"Perhaps you've heard of him. Eric Winslow?"

"Oh, yes. Eric Winslow. The millionaire industrialist, and his hobby is inventing things. He likes to invent things. He's even sold some of his inventions."

"That's right,"

"And I take it that the people who got those blueprints for him by burglarizing those places and photographing those blueprints and giving him the photographs of the blueprints are you and the people I came over here with?"

Sid and Swain said nothing.

"I see,"

I would have asked them if Hal and Valerie were two more of the burglars who were in on the burglaries at those places with them, but they may not tell me so they wouldn't take them down with them. To save them. That made sense. Even though Davis and Drumm and Craig and I knew that Valerie and Hal were burglars as well as the rest of them were.

And then there was something else: in order for Winslow to have the burglars burglarize those places and photograph those blueprints and give him the photographs of the blueprints meant that he had to have known the burglars or he knew about them. And if he knew about them, that would mean that he had connections to find out who they were and ask them to burglarize those places and photograph those blueprints and give him the photographs of the blueprints. I asked Sid if he had such connections.

"I don't know," Sid said. "He never told us and we never asked him. It was better that way. In case we get caught."

"Of course,"

"Because of your starting to look into the trespassing case, we're going to have to keep you from looking into the case any further. We can't have you find out what we did at that place outside town."

"I see. Well, now that I know why you're going to stop me from looking into the trespassing case, I'd like to know how you're going to keep me from looking into the trespassing case."

"Car accident. You were driving down the road, and all of a sudden, your car got out of control, and then you crashed into a tree in the wooded area, or you drove off of a cliff and down into the valley below, and then your car crashed and exploded, killing you, and destroying the car. And the flames from the car burned everything inside the car--including you--beyond recognition."

"I see. And how did the car get out of the control?"

"You ran out of brake fluid."

"Oh?"

"Yes. My two other associates are in the garage and draining the brake fluid out of your car right now. Draining the brake fluid out of your car instead of cutting the line to the brake will be a lot better. No suspicions will be aroused. No one will think that someone sabotaged your brakes before you had your accident."

"I see."

"I don't think anyone will find out that someone sabotaged your brakes before you had your accident. But, just in case."

"Of course."

"Well, I think we've discussed everything. Unless *you* have something you want to talk about."

"I can't think of anything."

"I'm sorry about this, Mr. Hurley. I've got nothing against you personally."

"Neither have I," Swain said.

"And neither have my other two associates who are working on your car right now."

"And I think that's it!" Davis announced on the bullhorn.

Sid and Swain looked to where they heard Davis talking.

"This is the police!" Davis continued. "Throw down your weapons and come out with your hands up."

Sid and Swain stopped suddenly and looked to where they heard Davis talking. Then, they looked at me. Then they looked to where Davis was talking again. Then they glanced at me again, and then Sid looked at Swain and spoke to him: "It was a set up!"

"Yeah!" Swain agreed. "And Hurley must have been in on it. But how could they have found out what we were telling Hurley? Gorman frisked him. He was clean. He didn't even have a wire on him."

Then Sid looked at me and spoke to me: "How?"

"Does it matter?" I said to him.

"No. I suppose not,"

"Well, what do we do now?" Swain asked Sid.

"Yeah," I said to Sid. "What *do* we do now?"

Quickly Sid decided, but before he could reach a decision, I shoved my elbow into Swain's stomach and yanked the gun out of his hand, and then I dove over the coffee table and onto the floor, and then I spun around, and then I saw Sid go for his gun, and then I shot his gun out of his hand. Then I stood up and held Swain's gun on Swain and on Sid, and then I spoke to Davis: "You can come in now, Captain."

Then Davis and some of his men came in, and the rest of Davis's men went and got Gorman and Cruthers.

CHAPTER XIII

I was back up here in Bellingham now. After I was done down in Ville, I had returned here to Bellingham, and then I rested up for a couple of days, and then I totaled up my bill for services rendered so I could give it to Drumm so he could pay me, and then I had called Drumm and had made an appointment with him to give him a report on the case and give him my bill for services rendered. Now I was here at Drumm Industries and parked my car in front of the main building so I could go into the main building and up to Drumm's office and give him the report on the case.

Inside the outer room of Drumm's office, Pamela was standing at the coffee bar and pouring herself a new cup of coffee. She was wearing a light blue dress and flesh tone stockings and shiny white high heel shoes.

She stopped pouring herself the new cup of coffee and looked up when she heard the door open and saw me come in. Then she smiled when she saw me and spoke to me: "Well, if it isn't the detective."

"Yeah," I said.

Pamela continued pouring her cup of coffee and spoke to me: "Would you like some coffee?"

"No thanks,"

Then Pamela sipped her coffee and walked back to her desk and sat down behind it and spoke to me again: "I'll tell him you're here." Then she picked up the receiver of her phone and pressed a button on her phone and spoke into the receiver: "Mr. Frank Hurley is here...All right." Then she replaced the receiver and spoke to me again: "He'll be with you in a moment."

"All right," I said, smiling.

"Well, Bob told me you've been busy looking into his being run out of Ville. One of the things you did during the investigation was have him and me put under twenty four hour protective and investigative surveillance."

"That's right. I didn't like doing it, but it had to be done."

"I understand, but I'm not upset. I'm just glad that you and Bob are all right."

"So am I,"

Pamela's phone rang. She picked up the receiver and said: "Yes?...All right." Then she replaced the receiver and spoke to me again: "He'll see you now."

Then I went in and closed the door, and Pamela resumed some paperwork of hers and continued sipping the coffee.

Drumm was behind his desk and stood up when he saw heard the door open and saw me come in. He was wearing a grayish three piece suit with black pinstripes and a white shirt with burgundy pinstripes and a burgundy tie.

He and I shook hands.

"Would you like to have something to drink?" Drumm offered me.

"No, I'm fine," I said.

Then the both of us sat down.

"Davis and his men have arrested all of those burglars," I reported. "And we found out something interesting about those burglars, too: they were members of a gang of burglars that hire out to people who wanted things burglarized and have things done inside those places. They called this group of burglars Burglars For Hire."

"Burglars For Hire."

"Yeah. And they have been hiding out in Ville whenever they weren't committing any burglaries for someone. And they hid out in the open: by being seen and doing their own private jobs and taking care of their own businesses. Just like anyone else."

"I see,"

"And Davis and his men have arrested Winslow, too." Then I told Drumm why Winslow had hired Burglars For Hire.

"Really?" Drumm said after I had finished.

"Yeah. And I've had Lieutenant Pritchard discontinue having you and your secretary be put under twenty four hour protective and investigative surveillance. There won't be any need to continue having you and your secretary be put under twenty four hour protective and investigative surveillance."

"Well, that's nice,"

"Yes, it is,"

"And my secretary likes it, too. I had to tell her what we were doing since you did have her as well as me be put under twenty four hour protective and investigative surveillance."

"Yes, I know. She did tell what we've been doing and why, but she told me she's not upset. She understood."

"Well, that's good."

"Yes, it is,"

"You did a good job, Mr. Hurley,"

"Thank you, Mr. Drumm. Here's my bill," I took the bill out of my pocket and gave it to him.

He looked at it. Then he spoke to me: "Well, it so happens that I can and will pay the bill right now." Then he wrote out a check to me and gave it to me.

I looked at it. Then I smiled. Then I spoke to Drumm again: "Thank you, Mr. Drumm."

"Thank *you*, Mr. Hurley. For finding out why those people ran me out of town. Now my conscious is clear."

"You're welcome, Mr. Drumm. And you might be pleased to know that the Tacoma police are making it a point to patrol Ville as much as they can now. So the next time you go to Ville for some reason, nothing should happen to you. You just get to do whatever you want to do in that place in peace."

"Well, that's nice."

"Yes. It is. And if you ever need anything else secret or illegal looked into, let me know."

"I will,"

Then the both of us stood up and shook hands.

"Thanks for coming in, Mr. Hurley," Drumm said.

"You're welcome, Mr. Drumm,"

Then I left Drumm's office and closed the door, and Drumm resumed some paperwork of his, and I left Drumm Industries and went over to my bank and deposited most of the check that Drumm had given me, and put the rest of the money in my wallet, and then I went over to my office and finished writing the report on the Drumm ejection case so I could close the case.

It was getting late in the day after I had finished writing the report on the Drumm ejection case and put the file on the case into the filing cabinet and closed and locked up the cabinet. Now the case was closed. And now I could go home and rest up and recuperate before I come back here to my office and wait for business to come my way. I was going to need to do that. So I turned the answering machine on, and then I walked over to the light on the wall and next to the front door of my office and turned it on, and then light flooded the room, and then I stepped out of my office and closed and locked the door, and then I got into my car and left my office and went home.